



# **TURKEY'S NEW REGIONAL SECURITY ROLE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES**

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Richard Weitz

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE



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IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES**

**Richard Weitz**

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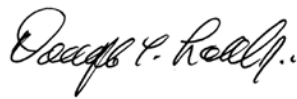
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## FOREWORD

Since the Cold War era, when the United States began heavily investing in Turkey's military and defense operations, the United States and Turkey have enjoyed a fruitful and mutually beneficial relationship. Because of Turkey's geographic location, political stability, and recent economic success, the country has served as a strategic ally in U.S. foreign policy. The Arab uprisings in particular have challenged the Turkish-U.S. partnership. For a country that was already struggling to balance its position as a regional power with the imperative of maintaining good relations with its Western allies, the increasing instability in the region has forced Ankara to rely more on the United States than it would prefer. Although the Syrian conflict has underscored to Turkey the value of its security ties with the United States, the war has also exposed deep differences between the two countries on fundamental issues. While presently partially buried, these differences could easily rise to the surface in coming years.



DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
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## SUMMARY

Until a few years ago, the relationship between Washington, DC, and Ankara, Turkey, was perennially troubled and occasionally terrible. Turks strongly opposed the U.S. 2003 invasion of Iraq and have subsequently complained that the Pentagon was allowing Iraqi Kurds too much autonomy, leading to deteriorating security along the Iraq-Turkey border. Disagreements over how to respond to Iran's nuclear program, U.S. suspicions regarding Turkey's outreach efforts to Iran and Syria, and differences over Armenia, Palestinians, and the Black Sea further strained ties and contributed to further anti-Americanism in Turkey. Now Turkey is seen as responding to its local challenges by moving closer to the West, leading to the advent of a "Golden Era" in Turkish-U.S. relations. Barack Obama has called the U.S.-Turkish relationship a "model partnership" and Turkey "a critical ally." Explanations abound as to why U.S.-Turkey ties have improved during the last few years. The U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq removed a source of tension and gave Turkey a greater incentive to cooperate with Washington to influence developments in Iraq. Furthermore, the Arab Awakening led both countries to partner in support of the positive agenda of promoting democracy and security in the Middle East. Americans and Turks both want to see democratic secular governments in the region rather than religiously sanctioned authoritarian ones. Setbacks in Turkey's reconciliation efforts with Syria, Iran, and other countries led Ankara to realize that having good relations with the United States helps it achieve core goals in the Middle East and beyond. Even though Turkey's role as a provider of security and stability in the region is weakened as

a result of the recent developments in Syria and the ensuing negative consequences in its relations to other countries, Turkey has the capacity to recover and resume its position. Partnering with the United States is not always ideal, but recent setbacks have persuaded Turkey's leaders that they need to backstop their new economic strength and cultural attractiveness with the kind of hard power that is most readily available to the United States. For a partnership between Turkey and the United States to endure, however, Turkey must adopt more of a collective transatlantic perspective, crack down harder on terrorist activities, and resolve a domestic democratic deficit. At the same time, Europeans should show more flexibility meeting Turkey's security concerns regarding the European Union, while the United States should adopt a more proactive policy toward resolving potential sources of tensions between Ankara and Washington that could significantly worsen at any time.

# **TURKEY'S NEW REGIONAL SECURITY ROLE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

During its past decade under the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or AKP), Turkey became a much more prominent global actor due to its dynamic diplomacy, strengthening economy, and the security vacuum in its turbulent neighborhood, which created a demand for the greater foreign policy activism Ankara was now able to provide. The “zero problems with neighbors” policy, which has been the cornerstone of the Turkish AKP party’s foreign policy under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, aims at resolving all Turkey’s problems with neighbors, or at least minimizing them as much as possible. Guided by the philosophy of Davutoğlu, the dominant strategic thinker of the AKP even before he became foreign minister, Turkey has sought to improve its political relations with its key neighbors by strengthening mutual economic links and by moving its position on prominent issues, such as Israel and Iran’s nuclear program, closer to the mainstream international view even if that differed from the position favored by the United States and most North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) governments. The goal has been to strengthen Turkey’s economy, achieve greater regional stability, and thereby raise Ankara’s global influence. The Turkish leadership recognized that regional conflict and competition would persist, but hoped the parties would keep these negative elements constrained to enjoy the positive benefits of improved economic relations and a more

secure region, which would provide Turkey with the “strategic depth” Ankara needed to become a great power. Turkey’s rapid economic growth is facilitating the modernization of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and the country’s domestic defense industry. Its large, predominately moderate Muslim population provides Ankara with one of the largest and most readily deployable armies in Europe. Turkey’s location astride multiple global hotspots – the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, etc. – widens NATO’s geographic perspective. Turkish strategic thinkers have traditionally seen their country as surrounded by unstable, potentially hostile geographic regions. Turkish foreign and defense policy has sought to reduce this instability – and ideally transform Turkey’s pivotal geopolitical position from that of a liability into an advantage – by partnering with the United States and other NATO countries. Being more flexible, however, recent Turkish foreign policy has also become less predictable, which complicates Ankara’s relations with Washington and other traditional partners. Within Turkey, newly empowered societal actors such as ethnic lobbies, business associations, influential civilian politicians, and a resurgent religious establishment have pushed for changes in long-established foreign and defense policies. Conversely, the Turkish military, previously the dominant security actor, has lost influence, weakening a traditional force favoring close ties with the United States. The AKP has managed to exploit Turkey’s efforts to join the European Union (EU) to justify stripping the TSK of political powers.

## EUROPEAN SECURITY

Turkey has presented both a challenge and an opportunity to NATO and the EU as they restructure their roles, missions, and capabilities to address Europe's 21st-century security challenges. Since NATO's foundation in 1949, the Alliance has played a crucial role in Turkey's security strategy and contributed to its integration with both Europe and the United States. During the Cold War, the Turkish government relied on its NATO membership and its bilateral alliance with the United States to backstop Turkey's security. The pro-Western elite that dominated the country's foreign and defense policies viewed Turkey's affiliation with NATO and ties to the United States as defining and ensuring its status as a core member of the Western camp.

NATO simultaneously defended Turkey against the Warsaw Pact and benefited from Ankara's efforts to deter Soviet adventurism. Though confrontations occurred between Turkey and fellow Alliance member Greece over Cyprus and other issues, these conflicts actually highlighted NATO's additional value in moderating differences between Athens and Ankara. Turkey has not only benefitted from NATO's support, but has also contributed heavily to the Alliance's effort to promote security in the Euro-Atlantic region and beyond. Turkey serves as the organization's vital eastern anchor, controlling the straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea and sharing a border with Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Although the Cold War is over, NATO's importance for Turkey remains. With much of Europe paralyzed due to the Euro crisis and with U.S. attention drifting eastward, Turkey has the opportunity to emerge as one of NATO's new leaders,



providing Ankara adopts more of a collective transatlantic perspective and stops trying to import its bilateral disputes with Israel and the EU into the Alliance's multinational deliberations. Having been a member of NATO since 1952, an aspirant for EU membership for over a decade, and disposing of one of Europe's most powerful military forces, Turkey must perforce be a key component of any effective European security architecture. Yet, finding an appropriate place for Ankara in the evolving EU-NATO balance has proven exceptionally difficult given the country's continued exclusion from the EU and dispute with the government of Cyprus.

Turkish officials have waged a protracted battle to influence EU security decisions and compel Greek Cypriots to reach a political settlement with their Turkish minority. In pursuit of these ends, they have proved willing to block EU-NATO cooperation on important security issues. A recurring problem is that Turkey is a member of NATO but not the EU, whereas Cyprus belongs to the EU but not NATO. The two countries have used the consensus rules of each organization to prevent one organization from cooperating with the other on important security issues. In particular, Turkish objections to the possible leaking of sensitive NATO military information to Cyprus have limited ties between the EU and NATO since Cyprus joined the Union in 2004. With no security arrangement in place, EU officers on the training mission for Afghan police are forced to improvise on the ground for their own protection with local International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commanders.

These mutual antagonisms have constrained NATO-EU cooperation in general, and disrupted the joint NATO-EU security missions in Afghanistan,

Kosovo, and in the Gulf of Aden in particular. For example, there is no comprehensive EU-NATO agreement on the provision by ISAF of security for the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) staff and no possibility to exchange classified and often critical information. Consequently, EUPOL has had to conclude individual agreements with Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) nations and has even been obliged to hire a private company to guarantee its security and to maintain an extremely tight security policy. Moreover, Turkey and the United States did not conclude bilateral agreements with EUPOL.

All this has slowed down EUPOL's deployment and hampered its effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> The AKP's dominant form of security discourse, with frequent references to multilateralism, soft power, and critical dialogue, resembles more closely that used by EU rather than U.S. officials, who try to "keep all options on the table," including the use of military force. But Turkey has always relied on the United States as well as NATO to provide such power when it is needed. For example, Turkey insisted on giving NATO control of the 2011 Libyan intervention.<sup>2</sup> Having NATO, rather than an ad hoc coalition or one led by the EU or United States, will likely remain Ankara's preference as long as Turkey is excluded from the EU.<sup>3</sup>

## NATO

When NATO was formed in April 1949, Turkey was not initially invited to join. Washington was reluctant to commit to defend distant Turkey, and had also rejected Turkish proposals for a bilateral alliance or a unilateral U.S. security guarantee. NATO's West European members did not want to risk diluting the

U.S. economic and other assistance they were receiving. Although some Turkish leaders wanted to pursue a more neutral foreign policy following NATO's snub, Turkish policymakers continued to pursue NATO membership, believing the Alliance offered Turkey the optimal Western anchor. Turkey's key contribution to the U.S.-United Nations (UN) Korean War effort augmented Ankara's renewed membership campaign. In September 1951, NATO invited Turkey, along with Greece, to join the Alliance. The United States was hesitant to extend its involvement in the Middle East due to its commitments in Europe and Asia.<sup>4</sup> Yet, with the outbreak of war in Southeast Asia, the decline of British influence in the Middle East, and the threat of Soviet aggression in the Mediterranean, the United States began to not only see the importance of the Middle East but also the importance of Turkey as a potential ally. At the time, several factors impeded Turkey's admission into NATO. Influential European leaders considered Turkey as part of the Middle East and did not want to extend the Marshall Plan to Turkey.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, London, United Kingdom (UK), and Washington pushed for Turkey's admission into NATO, primarily because of its "guardianship" of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus. Under the Montreux Convention, Turkey could close these straits to the Soviet Navy in wartime.<sup>6</sup>

Turkey has since made major contributions to Western security. During the Cold War, Turkey helped constrain the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean, provided one of the largest armies in Europe, and hosted key NATO military facilities. NATO planners were concerned with strategic weaknesses that could be exploited by the Soviet Union if war were to erupt between the Alliance and the Union of

Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). NATO's boundaries stretched from the North Cape in Norway to Mount Agri in eastern Turkey, and while central Europe was the primary focus of NATO's defense, its northern and southern flanks were dangerously exposed. Not only did NATO have to contend with Soviet ambitions in the Mediterranean, but it also had to deal with the deterioration of British influence in the Middle East and the disunity between the Arab states. The Middle East and the Mediterranean are also important because of vital transportation and communications lines and the raw materials located in the region.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Turkey not only played an important role in intelligence gathering, early warning, forward basing, logistics, and training, but also served as a valuable link between the Middle East and the West. This was demonstrated during the U.S. landings in Lebanon in 1958 and the Jordanian civil war in 1970. Until its military intervention in the Cyprus crisis, Turkey was "a strong element of stability in the eastern Mediterranean."<sup>8</sup>

The end of the Cold War, however, changed this relationship.<sup>9</sup> Turkey cooperated with the United States in the 1991 Gulf War and contributed to NATO-backed missions in the former Yugoslavia and Libya. But as the 1990s unfolded, Turkey suffered escalating terrorist violence in the southeast region, a major economic crisis, increased political polarization, a security vacuum in neighboring northern Iraq (which the PKK exploited), and perceived diminished Western interest and support.<sup>10</sup> The September 2001 (9/11) attack on the World Trade Center marked a new era in NATO's history, but it also led to a change of Turkey's role within the Alliance's structure. The more diverse security environment in the post-9/11 world has led

to NATO engagements far beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, and provided new importance to Turkey, given its geographical and cultural position in contemporary “out of area” missions.<sup>11</sup> There are three main developments that gave Turkey a more significant role in the organization. First, NATO’s attention expanded to include a wider geographical focus, reaching countries with a strategic distance away from the Euro-Atlantic geography. This included a specific focus on the Middle East and countries located in Turkey’s neighborhood. Second, the allies reached a consensus to include terrorism in NATO’s agenda, creating a need for new means and strategies, which largely depended on local knowledge that Turkey could contribute regarding its region. Third, Turkey has close physical and other connections with Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup>

Turkey brings other important assets to the NATO Alliance. It is the only predominantly Muslim member of NATO and boasts one of the world’s most dynamic economies. The country’s rapid growth is allowing the country to enhance its military forces through both foreign purchases and an improving domestic defense industry. Thanks to its large population and the geographically broad perspective of its national security community, Turkey has one of the largest and most readily deployable armies in Europe. With a force of over 600,000 personnel and a military budget of close to \$19 billion, Turkey has the second largest military in NATO.<sup>13</sup> Turkey borders three security hotspots of concern for the Alliance: the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. Turkey has contributed heavily to the NATO-led ISAF in Afghanistan, commanding ISAF on multiple occasions and stationing more than 1,700 troops in Kabul. Turkey has made substantial contributions to the reconstruction of the country.

One such example is the Vardak Provincial Construction Team, which was established in November 2006. Under its auspices, Turkey had provided \$200 million worth of aid by 2008.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Turkey has deployed soldiers to Afghanistan to train Afghan soldiers and police belonging to the Afghan National Security Forces. Turkey's training mission, its economic assistance, and its regional diplomatic initiatives aimed at reconciling Afghanistan and Pakistan are essential to promoting Afghanistan's security and post-conflict reconstruction. President Abdullah Gül has said that, "As stakeholders in the region, we cannot expect that the United States and other Western powers solve the problems by themselves. We should shoulder our responsibilities."<sup>15</sup> In addition, by constructing roads, Turkish firms are building stronger economic relations and diplomatic ties between Afghanistan and other countries.<sup>16</sup> With its involvement in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Turkey can not only take a stand against Taliban extremism, but also provide NATO with leverage against Iran.<sup>17</sup>

Turkey's influence in the Balkans, another area of concern for NATO, remains strong, especially since Ankara has improved relations with Serbia. Turkey has made contributions to the Kosovo Force (KFOR), the Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR), and the follow-on mission led by the European Union Force Althea.<sup>18</sup> For years, Turkish warships have been helping patrol the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean against terrorists and other threats to these vital lifelines. Ankara has supported expanding NATO's roster of members and partners since the Alliance's enlargement promotes stability in neighboring regions. Current Turkish efforts focus on assisting Georgia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and

Herzegovina in their efforts to join NATO at some point. In terms of NATO's "new missions," Turkey is playing a vital role in promoting NATO's energy security by serving as a vital conduit for oil and gas reaching Europe from Eurasia, especially the Caspian basin and Russia. Turkey's energy partnership and overall good relations with Russia, despite differences over the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) and Syria, have helped buffer Russia-NATO tensions on many issues. In the future, Turkish diplomats could help resolve the protracted conflicts in the former Soviet Union involving Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

Ankara has also played a critical role in the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), which is designed to deal with the threat posed by Iranian short- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles to U.S. assets, personnel, and allies in Europe.<sup>19</sup> When the Obama administration announced the EPAA, it was in Turkey's interest to integrate the U.S. program into NATO to present a transatlantic missile defense project as a NATO rather than a U.S. plan to its neighbors. In September 2011, Turkey agreed to host in Malatya a forward deployed AN/TPY-2 early warning radar system, operational since January 2012, as part of the EPAA ballistic missile defense program. Turkey has also played an important role in advancing NATO's security in the Middle East. From August 2004 to June 2013, Turkey hosted NATO's Allied Air Command Headquarters. This Air Command, located in Izmir, was part of Allied Joint Force Command Naples and safeguarded almost three million square miles of airspace across NATO's southern region. The Air Command in Turkey played an important role in Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR against Libya.<sup>20</sup> Turkey today



hosts NATO's Land Command headquarters, which is also located in Izmir, in addition to one of NATO's six "Rapid Deployable Corps," which are high readiness headquarters that can be quickly removed to lead NATO troops on missions within or beyond NATO territory.<sup>21</sup> As part of NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement, Turkey is reported to host U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on its territory at Incirlik Air Base.<sup>22</sup> Turkey and NATO have been aligning their policies toward Syria throughout the crisis there. Turkey is playing a crucial role in promoting NATO's energy security by serving as a vital conduit for oil and gas reaching Europe from Eurasia, especially the Caspian basin and Russia.

From Washington's perspective, Turkey has an exemplary nuclear nonproliferation record. Neither the collapse of the Eastern bloc, nor the wars involving neighboring Iraq, which under Saddam Hussein sought nuclear weapons and used chemical ones, nor Iran's nuclear ambiguous ambitions have prompted Turkey to pursue nuclear weapons. Of particular importance to Turkey's foreign policy are arms control and disarmament treaties. Turkey became a party to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1979 and to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 2000. Turkey also joined the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997 and the Biological Weapons Convention in 1974. In 1996, Turkey became the founding member of the Wassenaar Arrangement regarding export controls of conventional weapons and dual-use equipment and technologies. Turkey joined the Missile Technology Control Regime in 1997, the Zangger Committee in 1999, the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2000, and the Australia Group that seeks to ensure that exports do not contribute to the development of



chemical or biological weapons that same year. Turkey supports the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which was launched by President George W. Bush during a speech in Krakow, Poland, in May 2003.

Turkey joined, as initial partner state, the “Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism” (GICNT), launched by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Bush, following a joint statement in St. Petersburg, Russia, in July 2006. Turkey hosted the Initiative’s second meeting in Ankara in February 2007. Turkey became a signatory to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC) at the conference held in The Hague, the Netherlands, in November 2002. Furthermore, Turkey joined the “Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons” (CCW) and its three Protocols (Protocol I, Amended Protocol II, and Protocol IV) in 2005. Under the provisions of the Convention, Turkey is obligated to destroy its stockpiled anti-personnel land mines by 2008 and to clear mined areas by 2014. In order to destroy the stockpiled anti-personnel land mines, the “Turkish Armed Forces Munitions Disposal Facility” was built and has been operational since November 2007.

Turkey’s nonproliferation bona fides were highlighted by the March 26-27 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, Korea. Turkey’s delegation reported progress in adopting international treaties against nuclear terrorism, supporting UN and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) efforts in these areas, holding training courses for its customs and nuclear workers on nuclear security issues, participating in anti-nuclear smuggling initiatives, shipping dangerous highly enriched uranium spent reactor fuel to the United States for more secure storage, and upgrading

the safety and security regulations for its emerging civilian nuclear energy program, especially the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant project.

Nonetheless, several developments could move the environment in a more adverse direction. Most obviously, unambiguous evidence could arise that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons, which would compel Turkey to reassess its nuclear weapons policies. Turkey's plans to expand its domestic nuclear energy program would, for the first time, provide its government with the scientific, technical, and industrial foundations to pursue genuine nuclear weapons options, as Iran's own development of the capacity to make nuclear weapons has demonstrated to Ankara and others. But Turkey's leaders might still decide that, even if Iran developed a small nuclear arsenal, they would be better off continuing to rely on NATO and Washington as well as Turkey's powerful conventional military, bolstered by national and multinational missile defenses, rather than pursue an independent Turkish nuclear force as a means of deterring even a nuclear-armed Iran.

## EUROPEAN UNION

Turkey has been bidding to join the EU since 1959, only 2 years after the organization's inception. Ankara achieved this goal on September 12, 1963, with the signing of the Agreement creating an association between the Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community (EEC). This agreement aimed to move Turkey toward entry into a customs union with the EEC, both as an achievement in itself and as a means to facilitate Turkey's accession into the EEC as a full member.<sup>23</sup> This was accomplished with the 1963 Ankara Accession Agreement and its Additional

Protocol, which envisaged eventual EU membership; in 1995, Turkey joined the EU Customs Union. Turkey gained the right to export its goods duty free to EU countries though the freedom of movement was restricted to goods; Turks wishing to enter the EU still require an entry visa.

Negotiations toward Turkey's accession to the EU officially began on October 3, 2005. This process requires that the parties negotiate and close all 33 chapters of the EU *acquis communautaire* (the corpus of EU laws and policies). The opening and closing of individual chapters is subject to unanimity among the 27 EU member states, as is the final decision to conclude an Accession Treaty, making the whole process vulnerable to national vetoes and blackmail. All 27 EU governments must vote to open and close each chapter as well as to admit each new member.<sup>24</sup> As of now, only 13 chapters have been opened to Turkey; the European Council suspended eight chapters in December 2006. Austria, Cyprus, France, and Germany have blocked another nine chapters.<sup>25</sup> Turkey started accession negotiations with the EU at the same time as Croatia, which will soon join the EU. Fifteen other countries have joined the EU since 1987, when Turkey applied for full membership. Not only has Turkey's membership drive stalled while the EU has grown from 12 to 27 countries, but the EU has declined other Turkish priorities, such as being extended the visa-free entry privileges offered by all EU members to one another's citizens under the Schengen Treaty. Egemen Bagis, Turkey's Minister for EU Relations, has called these travel restrictions "not fair" since "Turkey is the only EU candidate country, whose citizens are still subject to visas."<sup>26</sup>

Since coming to power more than a decade ago, the ruling AKP has used the EU entry requirements as a justification and catalyst to promote economic and political reforms at home that have also served to strengthen the Turkish economy and to curtail the power of the Turkish military. Public opinion polls show that Turkey's EU membership drive continues to enjoy strong support among the country's elite despite falling popular support for membership. In a January 2013 opinion survey, 87 percent of experts still favored joining the EU, while only 33 percent of the public were in favor of persisting.<sup>27</sup> The other main political parties still officially support Turkey's quest for EU accession.

Yet, the question of Turkish accession has been problematic for many years. Many Europeans have been concerned about Turkey's poor human rights record, restrictions on media freedoms, potential miscarriages of justice, constraints on Kurdish rights, and nonrecognition of the Republic of Cyprus. Disputes with EU countries over various Turkish domestic and foreign policies have led Turkish leaders to lose faith that Ankara will soon be invited to join as a full member. EU members have become preoccupied with organizational reform, economic restructuring, and integrating recent members. Efforts to develop a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) distinct from NATO have presented challenges for Turkey due to its limited influence on EU decisionmaking. In addition, many Europeans characterize the accession negotiations that formally began in October 2005 as a decades-long process that might not lead to full membership even if Turkey completes them successfully.

Numerous domestic and external issues have negatively affected the negotiation process. Supporters of

EU membership for Turkey argue that the AKP has managed to stabilize the economy and suppress the scope for military coups since it came to power in 2002. It has built good ties with international donor organizations and can count on the support of the European Commission in its dispute with the Constitutional Court in regards to its legitimacy.<sup>28</sup> Critics argue that Turkey is mostly located in Asia. Also, the proximity to security areas such as Iraq, Iran, and Syria does not appeal to some EU leaders. They argue that EU's Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) is not ready to shoulder more responsibility in the Middle East, and that Turkey's membership would link the otherwise fairly peaceful and quiet EU more strongly to a very volatile region in security terms. As for Turkey's new political stability, critics argue that the AKP achieved this through suppression of government critics. The recent mass protests against the Erdoğan government have reinforced these concerns.

Public opinion in several EU countries, such as Austria and France, has opposed Turkey's membership. This fact became significant when both governments announced they would hold referendums on Turkey's accession. In addition, the 2004 entry into the EU of the Republic of Cyprus, not recognized by Turkey, further complicated matters since, once having joined, Cyprus could veto Turkey's entry. The Cypriot government has blocked six chapters of Turkish accession negotiations, arguing that Ankara needs to normalize relations with them before being considered as a potential EU member.<sup>29</sup> When Cyprus held the rotating EU presidency during the last 6 months of 2012, Turkey-EU relations froze solid with no progress in their negotiations and minimal official contact between Turkey and the EU. Leading EU countries,

such as France and Germany, openly expressed their unease regarding Turkey's joining the EU and instead proposed establishing a "privileged partnership" for Turkey short of membership, which Ankara has rejected. As a result, talks between Ankara and Brussels became rather quiet, stale, and unproductive throughout the following years and leading up to the present. Turks have become frustrated by these negotiations, which have been stalled for years. The EU's protracted crises have also considerably decreased Turkish interest in the organization.

The official reason given for suspending the accession negotiations with Turkey was Ankara's refusal to apply the Customs Union between the EU and Turkey to the Republic of Cyprus.<sup>30</sup> Vessels flying Cypriot flags are barred from entering Turkish ports.<sup>31</sup> On July 20, 1974, Turkey invaded and occupied a third of the island after a Greek initiated coup attempted to secure power and annex the island to Greece.<sup>32</sup> The Turkish government seized for its citizens the northern section of the island, which they then self-declared to be the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The rest of the island, besides the small segment that is currently being occupied by UN Peacekeeping forces, is known as the Republic of Cyprus. The problem is that the Turkish government refuses to recognize the Republic of Cyprus because of their dispute over the rightful possession and subsequent governance of the island as well as the Northern Cyprus blockade currently in place. The Republic of Cyprus has been a member of the EU since 2004 and, as a result, many EU countries have banded together in support of that entity. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is recognized by the international community, including the EU, as an "occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus."<sup>33</sup> Tur-

key does not recognize the ethnically Greek Republic of Cyprus. EU nations such as France and Germany have unequivocally said to the Turkish government that they need to treat Cyprus the same as any other EU member state, starting with recognizing them as a sovereign nation. However, leadership from Ankara is standing its ground firmly in refusing to make such acknowledgments, even if it means possibly terminating their chance at joining the EU.<sup>34</sup>

France has played a lead role in impeding Turkey's accession in recent years. The French government led the effort in 2006 to suspend the negotiations after Turkey refused to recognize the Republic of Cyprus. France vetoed 11 out of the 35 chapters, which caused the accession talks to virtually halt (only eight remain suspended as of early-2013).<sup>35</sup> Relations rapidly deteriorated when the French Senate approved a bill that would punish those who deny internationally recognized genocides. Turks saw this legislative measure as an explicit reference to their denial of the Armenian genocide in 1915.<sup>36</sup> Many Turkish officials argued that the bill was a campaign strategy by then French President Nicholas Sarkozy aimed at recruiting votes from the Armenian population in France.<sup>37</sup>

In retaliation to the proposed bill, Turkey imposed immediate political, military, and economic sanctions. For example, Turkey did not renew permission for French military planes to use Turkish airspace.<sup>38</sup> These sanctions were quickly lifted and a French court eventually negated the bill, but relations between the two countries remained cold throughout the Sarkozy presidency.<sup>39</sup> However, since Sarkozy left office in 2012, France has had a revamped policy regarding Turkish accession. President Hollande has openly stated his support for Turkey's becoming an EU mem-

ber at some point.<sup>40</sup> Following his election in 2012, his administration advocated opening some of the eight chapters of the accession talks that were closed.<sup>41</sup> In February 2013, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoğlu of his willingness to open Chapter 22 of the *acquis* regarding “Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments.”<sup>42</sup> According to the European Commission, this chapter consists:

mostly of framework and implementing regulations, which do not require transposition into national legislation. They define the rules for drawing up, approving and implementing Structural Funds or Cohesion Fund programs reflecting each country’s territorial organization. . . . Member States must have an institutional framework in place and adequate administrative capacity to ensure programming, implementing, monitoring and evaluation in a sound and cost-effective manner from the point of view of management and financial control.<sup>43</sup>

This was followed by Angela Merkel’s trip to Ankara in late-February 2013, where she not only supported the opening of Chapter 22, but also suggested potentially opening other chapters to advance the accession talks.<sup>44</sup>

Germany’s backing of France in welcoming the resumption of accession talks between Turkey and the EU was a major shift for Berlin. Germany has long been an opponent of Turkish accession despite having one of the largest Turkish populations outside of the native country. Chancellor Merkel was the first to propose a “privileged partnership” between Turkey and the EU as an alternative to full membership. Many Germans have long held a position of not wanting



Turkey to become a member state, despite its booming economy and critical geographic location. Other EU officials have expressed concerns about the EU needing Turkey more than vice versa due to Turkey's more dynamic economy and increased foreign policy options. German officials have also adopted a more positive attitude toward Turkey's accession drive. In 2012, German Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle, said that:

We, the Europeans, should open chapters to negotiations with Turkey in the first half of 2013. Otherwise, in the upcoming term, our interest in Turkey may be greater than Turkey's interest in us.<sup>45</sup>

Gunther Oettinger, Germany's EU commissioner, said that the EU could eventually "crawl to Ankara on its knees to beg the Turks to join the EU."<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, Turkish officials are maneuvering, such as by threatening to abandon the EU and seek membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), to give Ankara more leverage in the accession negotiations. On October 12, 2011, the EU Commission released a "Positive Agenda" document that listed and rated progress being made between Turkey and the EU. It offered favorable conclusions regarding Turkey's political reforms in key areas. The new EU approach is seen as a complement rather than a substitute for EU membership, since it could impart new momentum to the accession process as well as prepare Turkey better for it. The positive agenda includes eight areas of joint interest: political reforms in Turkey, visas, the EU *acquis*, migration, energy, trade, foreign policy dialogue, counterterrorism, and further participation of Turkey in EU programs. Joint

EU-Turkish Working Groups have been formed to see how progress can be made regarding these issues. The newly created EU External Action Service has established a special Turkey team to support this process.

Turkey's excellent economic performance during the past decade, contrasted with the overall economic weakness within the EU, has made Ankara a more attractive partner for the Union. In fact, former Turkish Foreign Minister Yaşar Yakış has expressed the opinion of many Turks when he argued that Turkey should delay negotiating with the EU over accession since Turkey's bargaining position will improve as the Turkish economy continues to perform much better than the EU average. Turkey's economy is projected to grow for the next decade at an average rate of 6.7 percent per year.<sup>47</sup> It would already rank as the sixth largest among EU members. Turkey's geography also makes it a natural conduit for EU trade and investment flowing eastward to Eurasia and the Middle East, and oil and gas from the Caspian Basin entering the EU.<sup>48</sup>

As a partial EU member, Turkey offers a large market for European goods and simultaneously acts as a gateway to markets in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>49</sup> For Berlin, this is especially crucial, given that Germany sustains its economy through exports.<sup>50</sup> Conversely, Ankara's continued interest in joining the EU results in part from Turkey's economy still being oriented toward Europe. Although the percentage of Turkish trade involving the EU has continued to decline over time, some 38 percent of its imports originated from the EU in 2011, whereas 46 percent of Turkey's exports go to EU members.<sup>51</sup> Those shares amounted to \$85 billion and \$58 billion, respectively.<sup>52</sup> These trade volumes have kept increasing despite the current Euro crisis and the more rapid growth of

Turkey's economic links with Russia and many other countries. Turkey's imports from the EU increased by 35.1 percent and 19.8 percent in 2010 and 2011, respectively, while exports grew 18.4 percent and 12.7 percent in those same years. Approximately two-thirds of Turkey's foreign direct investment still comes from the EU.<sup>53</sup>

But one might wonder how long Germany will hold this more flexible position. Merkel's encouraging approach toward Turkish accession was partly due to the forthcoming German national elections in 2014. In the 2009 election, the Christian Democratic Party (CDP) eased its anti-Turkish position in order to appeal to the 690,000 Turkish voters<sup>54</sup> and 3 million residents of Turkish origin living in Germany.<sup>55</sup> The CDP might be preparing for a similar electoral gambit on this occasion. In addition, although Germany has now come out in favor of opening of a new chapter in negotiations, the German government has conditioned expanding the renewed EU-Turkey talks to cover additional chapters to Turkey's applying its Ankara Agreement to the Republic of Cyprus.<sup>56</sup> By enunciating this condition, the Merkel government has indicated its willingness to engage more with Turkey in the field of European integration, but stands firm on the matter of its accession to the EU. Indeed, the chapter opened is relatively minor and not subject to much controversy, unlike the chapters concerning human rights or Cyprus. Hence, Merkel's change of position is more symbolic than significant.

Many other EU leaders naturally want to focus on addressing the EU's internal problems before seriously discussing Turkish accession.<sup>57</sup> Germany's reaction to the recent thaw between France and Turkey is further complicated by the differing views among parties

within Germany. Merkel's CDP is much less favorably disposed to accession than the Free Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party, which both officially favor full Turkish accession into the EU.<sup>58</sup> The CDP prefers granting Turkey only partial membership in order to maintain good relations with one of Germany's biggest economic partners.<sup>59</sup> Even though Merkel reassured Turkey about the accession process, she did not promise full accession.<sup>60</sup> Finally, despite the political pivots made by Germany and France, Turkey still faces many hurdles in the accession process. For example, France is still blocking four Chapters, while Cyprus is blocking another six, making full accession improbable in the near future.<sup>61</sup>

### **TROUBLED TRIANGLE: NATO, THE EU, AND TURKEY**

Despite the difficulties with making progress in the EU admission process, European leaders are aware that Europe's security cannot be separated from Mediterranean security, and there have been various attempts to establish a sustainable relationship between EU and Turkey. The task of redefining a security relationship between EU and Turkey has proved difficult, mostly because of EU's internal problems with defining the limits of integration and responsibility within defense and security policy. As a result, it will most likely continue to be in Turkey's interest to maintain NATO as the most powerful institution for defense and security in Europe even while Turkey continues to participate in military and civilian ESDP missions. Indeed, Turkey has been the most active participant in ESDP missions among countries outside of the EU, and more active than many EU-states as well.<sup>62</sup>

In 1992, Turkey was granted associate status in the Western European Union (WEU) as a means to allow for an EU-Turkey security partnership to develop even without granting Turkey full membership in the EU. Turkey was directly involved in planning and preparing WEU operations in which NATO assets and capabilities were to be used, thanks to Ankara's status as one of the six "associate members" (Turkey, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Poland, and the Czech Republic) that had membership in NATO and the WEU. Turkey could attend its bi-weekly ambassador-level meetings, send officers to the WEU defense planning cell, and have Turkish parliamentarians attend the sessions of the WEU Assembly. Turkey also had the right to participate fully in WEU decisions when they involved collective NATO assets.<sup>63</sup> But Ankara lost this favorable situation when the EU decided to end the WEU's role in the ESDI and develop the ESDP wholly within the EU instead. Turkey subsequently found itself marginalized in the European security system and feared that the EU could potentially operate in its areas of interest without Ankara's having any input to the decision.<sup>64</sup>

NATO and the EU have sought to cooperate more effectively to address European security challenges. This collaboration has included sharing high-value but scarce assets, developing mutually profitable divisions of labor, and conducting joint operations, as in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and against Somali pirates. A priority is to avoid the creation of gaps, needless redundancies, institutional rivalries, or tensions between countries belonging to one but not the other — such as Turkey and the United States. After decades of informal talks between their officials and member governments, NATO and the EU established formal

institutionalized relations in 2001 in response to the EU's expanding range of security and defense activities, as manifested in its ESDP. (Technically, it is the ESDP rather than the EU per se that has institutional ties with NATO).<sup>65</sup> The 1992 Maastricht Treaty had designated the WEU as the EU's defense component. Its main responsibility was to undertake the "Petersberg tasks" (humanitarian missions, search and rescue operations, crisis management, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and environmental protection). Maastricht also established an intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). NATO and the WEU had developed extensive cooperation over the preceding decades. Welcoming potential EU contributions for the Petersberg tasks despite NATO's also performing the same types of missions, NATO governments agreed in 1994 that the WEU could use NATO collective assets, following the approval of the North Atlantic Council (NAC), for Petersberg-type missions under the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Alliance likewise approved the concept of Combined Joint Task Forces, whose "separable but not separate" deployable headquarters could be used for EU- as well as NATO-led operations. In June 1996, the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Berlin sought to promote an ESDI within the Alliance in an effort to encourage European members to assume more of NATO's roles and responsibilities by strengthening their defense capabilities. Under what became known as the "Berlin Plus" agreement, the ministers further agreed to make NATO assets available for WEU-led crisis management operations.

Meanwhile, European governments also took steps to strengthen the EU's security and defense role independent of NATO. At their December 1998 sum-

mit in St. Malo, France, the British and French governments issued a joint statement that affirmed the goal of establishing an ESDP within the EU. The following December, however, the European Council meeting in Helsinki, Finland, transferred the EU crisis management role from the WEU to the EU. At the November 2002 Prague Summit, the NATO members consented in principle to making NATO assets and capabilities available for EU-led operations in which the Alliance was not militarily engaged. The EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP issued in December 2002 defined the political principles that would govern their relationship: effective mutual consultation; equality; institutional decisionmaking autonomy; respect for member states' interests; and the coherent, transparent, and mutually reinforcing development of their military capabilities.<sup>66</sup> The declaration affirms NATO's continued role in crisis management and conflict prevention (as well as collective defense), while stating that the EU's growing activities in the first two areas will contribute to their common goals.

In March 2003, NATO and the EU finalized adoption of the Berlin Plus agreements that allows the EU to use NATO's collective assets and capabilities for EU-led crisis management operations, including NATO's command arrangements, logistics assistance, and assistance in operational planning, when NATO as an institution is not involved in the operation. Only EU members that are either also NATO members or that have joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Program, and thereby established a bilateral security arrangement with NATO, are eligible to use these NATO assets.<sup>67</sup> At the end of that month, the EU began its first Berlin Plus operation when its Operation CONCORDIA replaced the NATO-led Operation ALLIED HARMONY in the former Yugoslav Republic



of Macedonia. After the transition, some NATO assets supported the EU-led follow-on operation.<sup>68</sup> Another Berlin Plus operation began in late-2004, when the EU's Operation ALTHEA replaced the NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>69</sup>

As originally formulated, the Berlin Plus agreement Arrangement between NATO and the EU meant that the non-EU European NATO allies could contribute to EU-led operations without participating in the decisionmaking process regarding these operations. Consequently, Turkey decided to use its decisionmaking powers in NATO to stall implementation of Berlin Plus agreements to force the EU to accept a more favorable arrangement from Ankara's perspective. In December 2001, Turkey, the UK, and the United States signed the Ankara Document, which guaranteed that NATO members not in the EU could participate in ESDP decisions when contributing to them. The EU heads of state and government adopted the document during their Brussels Summit in October 2002 as the "ESDP: Implementation of the Nice Provisions on the Involvement of the non-EU European Allies." This Nice Implementation Document served as the basis of the December 2002 NATO-EU Joint Declaration that was adopted by the North Atlantic Council on December 13, 2002, and the decision of the December 2002 European Council session in Copenhagen, Denmark, that the Berlin Plus agreements would apply only to EU members that also belonged to NATO or had joined its PfP Program. The Copenhagen Summit also agreed that Turkey could participate in EU-led operations in its geographic vicinity if Ankara wanted to do so.<sup>70</sup>

Turkey has since become the largest contributor to ESDP missions of any non-EU country and has even



contributed more than some EU members. According to many Turkish officials, however, the EU failed to live up to this commitment, resulting in Turkey being asked to contribute to ESDP operations that Ankara had little input in planning or initiating. In December 2002, the EU issued a declaration of intent to establish nine 2,000-troop battle groups by 2007 as rapid reaction units for foreign crises. The EU has had two battle groups on permanent standby since 2007, but the failure of EU member governments to agree regarding how, when, and where to employ them has prevented them from ever being used.<sup>71</sup> In November 2004, the Turkish government declared its intent to contribute forces and capabilities to the battle groups, but in June 2007, Ankara withdrew its air and naval contributions due to its exclusion from ESDP decisionmaking structures.<sup>72</sup> Further use of the Berlin Plus agreements has been limited due to their inapplicability to the short time frames intended for many EU crisis-response operations as well as their political and structural complexity.<sup>73</sup> By contrast, in the ground operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, as well as in the maritime counterpiracy mission off Somalia, when EU and NATO missions have overlapped, the EU and NATO have established various ad hoc command and communications arrangements for these parallel operations.<sup>74</sup>

Since 2007, NATO and the EU have had some two dozen common member countries. But since both institutions decide many important security and defense issues by consensus, countries that have membership in one organization but not the other can exert substantial negative influence on the level of cooperation between the institutions. At present, NATO members Canada, Iceland, Norway, Turkey, and the

United States are not EU members, while the traditionally neutral or nonaligned EU members Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Malta, and Sweden are not NATO members, though four of the five (Malta since April 2008 but still not Cyprus) have joined NATO's PfP, which allows for institutionalized cooperation between members and partners in support of NATO goals. All these countries participate in official NATO-EU meetings. With Malta's entry into PfP in 2008 and France's re-entry into NATO's Integrated Military Command in 2009, Cyprus has become the main outlier within the NATO-EU partnership. Cyprus is not a PfP member and, partly due to a Turkish veto, does not have a security agreement with NATO for exchanging classified documents. As a result, it uniquely cannot participate in official NATO-EU meetings, though informal meetings including Cyprus do occur. The row has led Greece and Cyprus to object to any Turkish participation in the development of the ESDP while Turkey has blocked the Greek Cypriots from joining EU-NATO meetings and from taking part in ESDP missions using NATO intelligence and resources.

Turkish objections to sharing sensitive NATO military information with the government of Cyprus, which joined the EU in May 2004 despite its failure to adopt a UN-backed political settlement with the island's Turkish minority, has limited formal NATO-EU intelligence sharing since then.<sup>75</sup> The Cyprus government, sometimes assisted by Greece and other EU members, has retaliated by blocking Turkey's participation in certain EU defense activities, such as the work of the European Defense Agency. A recurring justification is that Turkey has not complied with its obligations under its accession negotiations to open its ports and airports to Cypriot-registered ships

and aircraft.<sup>76</sup> The dispute has impeded a range of possible EU-NATO cooperation. The various EU-NATO institutional arrangements and meetings in Europe have been constrained by an inability to hold formal sessions with an agreed agenda or the authority to reach substantive decisions.<sup>77</sup> These mutual antagonisms have also disrupted the joint NATO-EU security missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and in the Gulf of Aden off Somalia. Thanks to its full membership in NATO, Turkey has the ability in principle to deny the use of any NATO collective assets for any future EU-led mission.

When the December 2000 EU Summit in Nice, France, decided to exclude non-EU-NATO members from the EU's security and defense decisionmaking mechanisms, Ankara's national security community worried that it could have little impact on EU policies that could affect Turkey's security. It also anticipated that the EU would therefore pay less attention to Turkish concerns than would the WEU and NATO. More generally, Turkish policymakers were concerned about the EU's lack of will and ability to defend Turkey. In addition to the often grudging support for Ankara against the PKK terrorists and periodic denunciations of an "Armenian genocide" that many Turks deny ever occurred, many West European governments proved reluctant to render Turkey military assistance during the 1991 Persian Gulf War with Iraq. Due to its persistent capabilities-expectations gap, moreover, the EU did not (and still does not) look like it would soon develop more robust military assets comparable to those available to NATO, thanks largely to its U.S. membership. Conversely, there was the theoretical possibility that, in a confrontation between Turkey and Greece, the WEU would be obliged to side with Athens simply due to its EU membership.<sup>78</sup> Finally,

some Turkish policymakers resented that, due to the barriers placed on Turkey's desired accession to the EU, the former Soviet bloc countries that would soon join the EU would have more influence on the organization's European security policies than Turkey, a long-standing Western ally within NATO.<sup>79</sup>

Turkey aspires to a leadership role in the Alliance, but Turkey's contributions risk being overshadowed by its petty efforts to limit NATO's ties with Israel and the EU. Turkey's love-hate relationship with the EU is a major complicating factor for Turkey's NATO relationship. Even setting aside its frustrated EU membership ambitions, Turkey's security relationship with the EU remains so problematic as to threaten its ties with NATO. The most immediate problem is the paralyzing effects of the Turkey-Cyprus dispute on institutional cooperation between NATO and the EU. The dispute with the EU, along with those with France and the United States in recent years, helps explain why opinion polls show that popular support for NATO is lower in Turkey than in any other member country. Turkish diplomats initially refused to allow EU leaders to attend NATO's May 2012 heads-of-state summit in Chicago on the grounds that the EU was making no greater contribution to NATO than the 56-member Organization of Islamic Conference, then led by Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, a Turkish national, and other international organizations. In the end, the EU leaders were allowed to attend some NATO sessions but not others.

Turkey's relations with NATO have also suffered from various other problems, including *de facto* Turkish-Russian collusion to limit NATO's presence in the Black Sea, diverging threat perceptions regarding Iran, and Ankara's opposition to the appointment of

Rasmussen as NATO's Secretary General due to his stance, when head of the Danish government, on the Danish cartoon portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad. Nonetheless, Turkish policymakers definitely preferred having a transatlantic institution of which Ankara was a core member dominate European security than having EU structures potentially displace it.

## THE MIDDLE EAST

Turkey's geostrategic position between Europe and the Middle East has made the country an important NATO ally and an essential partner for both the United States and European countries. With its secular values, it has been important for Turkey to preserve its Western ties. Although Turkey has never ignored its proximity to the Middle East, Ankara tended to collaborate the most with Iran, Israel, or other non-Arab states. But during the past decade, Turkey broke with Israel and reengaged in the Arab world after years of estrangement.<sup>80</sup> In Washington and Ankara, expectations were high that Erdoğan's successful "Turkish Model"—a moderate Sunni government with a dynamic economy tied to the United States--could be exported.<sup>81</sup>

The Obama administration assigned Turkey an important role in advancing U.S. interests in the Middle East while allowing Washington to stay in the background in a component of a "lead from behind" foreign-policy strategy.<sup>82</sup> For both Turkey and Washington, trying to manage the difficult political transitions in the Middle East has become the primary issue in the Ankara-Washington relationship.<sup>83</sup> This partnership has seen both progress and setbacks. With fresh self-confidence, the government in Ankara tried

to meet these expectations using the soft power of its model along with skillful diplomacy. Of course, given the situation in the region today, the “zero problems” phrase has become something of a joke for Ankara. Following some transient improvements, Turkey’s relations with Iraq, Iran, Syria, Israel, Egypt, and other Middle Eastern governments have regressed to their troubled mean and sometimes even worse. Ankara is the only government not to have an ambassador in Cairo, Damascus, and Tel Aviv simultaneously. At the cost of some popularity, Erdoğan is seen as the champion of radical Sunni policies in the Middle East rather than a renewed Ottoman leader. Turkey’s troubles with its neighbors have helped drive Ankara back toward the United States, which has the hard power even if it chooses not to use it, but Turkish-U.S. differences regarding many Middle Eastern issues are acute.

## **Syria.**

Since the Syrian crisis began, Turkey and the United States have been effectively coordinating their policies. They first sought to induce Bashar al-Assad, whom Washington was trying to wean away from Iran, to introduce reforms demanded by the moderate protesters. But after Assad only made fig-leaf reforms designed to divide the opposition and reduce foreign resistance, Washington and Ankara demanded a change of regime in Damascus. They have since imposed various sanctions on the Syrian government, but these measures have been challenged by China, Iran, and Russia. Although Turkey and the United States have followed similar paths regarding Syria, the journey has proven far costlier to Turkey. Bilateral

trade between Turkey and Syria reached \$2.5 billion in 2010, making Turkey Syria's largest trading partner, but has since collapsed, as have various Turkish visions of establishing a free trade agreement, a customs union, or other region-wide economic structures. In addition, Turkey has accepted more than 600,000 refugees from its neighbor in accordance with Ankara's "open door" policy to those fleeing the civil war.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, both the Syrian National Council and the Free Syrian Army have used Turkey as a base for organizing their resistance against Assad's forces. Turkey has also supported the war against Assad by quietly allowing the passage through its territory of volunteers from Muslim countries to fight in Syria. In addition, some sources claim that the Syrian rebels have received weapons and other military support transported through Turkey and funded by Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The Turkish government has denied this claim on several occasions.<sup>85</sup> Even so, the confrontation with Syria has contributed to negating Turkey's "zero-problems" policy toward its neighbors. In contrast, the United States had few economic or diplomatic ties with Assad's regime, so lost little in calling for his removal and imposing sanctions on his country.

It is easy to forget that the relationship between Turkey and Syria significantly improved after the AKP came to power in November 2002. When Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu began their intense effort to improve the relations with the country's neighbors, Syria became one of the most important targets. The Turkish effort to strengthen relations with Syria resulted in frequent meetings between Erdoğan and Assad bolstered by growing diplomatic and commercial ties between the two countries. On December 22, 2004, Turkey and Syria signed

a free trade agreement (the Association Agreement) in Damascus, which entered into force in January 2007.<sup>86</sup> In many ways, Syria became a showcase symbol of Turkey's new foreign policy strategy of zero problems with neighbors. But Erdoğan misjudged when he believed he could persuade Assad to accept needed reforms.<sup>87</sup> As the situation in Syria became worse during the summer of 2011, Davutoğlu went to Damascus to encourage Assad in person to end his repressive policies. The mission failed. Following Assad's continuing use of violence against his own people, Turkey drastically changed its policy toward Syria. Both countries withdrew their diplomatic representatives and suspended the Association Agreement.<sup>88</sup> Erdoğan became one of the first leaders to call for Assad to leave power.<sup>89</sup>

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and Turkey's willingness to harbor Syrian rebels and refugees, Turkey has been subjected to a series of cross-border attacks. In an April 2012 incident, Syrian soldiers opened fire on Syrian rebels and refugees in the Turkish town of Kilis, killing two Syrian refugees and wounding some two dozen people.<sup>90</sup> The downing of a Turkish fighter plane over Syrian air space in June 2012 was but the most prominent of several incidents of the deteriorating security situation between the two countries.<sup>91</sup> Following the incident, the Turkish government decided, with Washington's encouragement, to request assistance only under Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which provides for urgent consultations if a NATO member considers its security interests threatened.

Turkey did not seek Article 5 protection, which calls for collective defensive actions to counter threats, because few NATO members want to employ military



force against Syria. The Alliance justified deploying Patriot air defense missiles in southern Turkey as a purely defensive “precautionary measure” to counter any threat emanating from Syria.<sup>92</sup> NATO’s Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) Missile Interceptor Batteries are some of the most sophisticated air and missile defense systems in Western inventories. Combined with the high accuracy of their radar sensors and targeting systems, the Patriots can intercept foreign warplanes and short-range ballistic missiles as far as 100 kilometers (km) away, allowing them to command an area well beyond the Turkish-Syrian border – all of northern Syria to include the embattled towns of Aleppo and Homs.<sup>93</sup>

While the earlier 1990 and 2003 Turkish requests for Patriots from NATO provoked major intra-Alliance divisions, on this occasion the NATO decision-making process went more smoothly. Davutoğlu and other Turkish diplomats engaged in lengthy and comprehensive consultations with the other NATO governments even though only Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States have the PAC-3s.<sup>94</sup> NATO largely has remained aloof from the Syrian crisis, but with the Patriot systems have come hundreds of NATO troops to operate, maintain, and protect the Patriot interceptors, their radars, and their other support elements. In effect, the NATO personnel have become a “trip wire” that makes NATO military intervention more likely following future Syrian-Turkish border clashes. This tactic has seemingly worked. Since the missiles arrived, there have not been any further major airstrikes against Turkish territory. The Syrian military has likely been more cautious in its operations near the Turkish border. Even so, NATO has not tried to use its Patriots to establish a no-fly zone over Syr-

ian airspace, which the systems have the capacity to do. Such a step would make it easier for the guerrillas to establish camps and troop concentration across the border in Syrian territory.

Some Turkish officials and commentators have called for Turkish military intervention to protect Syria's civilians or Ankara's economic and security interest.<sup>95</sup> The Turkish government has reinforced its border and authorized more flexible rules of engagement for the TSK to respond to potential threats from Syrian forces approaching the Turkish border. Turkey has experienced numerous cross-border attacks by Syrian government forces, terrorist attacks by groups linked to the Assad regime, and a surging number of Syrian refugees taking up residence in Turkey – whose numbers have exceeded by several orders of magnitude the burden Turkish leaders said at the beginning of the war they could tolerate. If Turkey does intervene militarily, the Obama administration would likely again follow its “lead from behind” strategy and, as in Libya, provide primarily low-profile intelligence and logistics support for the Turkish military. Washington has been concerned that the failure to uphold its perceived “red lines” in Syria will decrease U.S. credibility and encourage Iran, North Korea, and other countries to challenge other declared U.S. red lines. But although Ankara and Washington have had their opportunities to intervene more directly in the Syrian conflict, they repeatedly have declined to exploit possible pretexts for employing their armed forces to remove Assad.

Neither Turkey nor the United States wants to intervene militarily in the Syrian war. Ankara has declined to exploit several opportunities that would have served as pretexts, including cross-border shoot-

ings and shelling against refugees fleeing into Turkey. On paper, the TSK should be able to defeat the divided and weakened Syrian military, but the Turkish military has fought only irregular PKK guerrillas for the past few decades and lacks experience in invading and occupying a foreign country. An invading Turkish military might be welcomed as liberators by Syrian Sunnis, but the country's Kurds and Alawites would more likely respond negatively to a Turkish occupation force and perhaps even respond with an anti-occupation insurgency such as those that harassed the U.S. Army in Iraq and Afghanistan. Perhaps the main Turkish concern is that, once Turkish forces occupy Syria, they will become bogged down trying to suppress the fighting among the various factions.

The Syrian regime is not without means to retaliate for whatever measures Turkey and the United States adopt in support of Assad's opponents. In partnership with Iran, the Syrian government could resume its pre-1998 practice of providing extensive support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Many PKK operatives were born or based in Syria. The recent upsurge in PKK attacks against Turkish targets may be a Syrian-Iranian warning to Ankara to moderate its pressure on Assad. Even excluding the PKK factor, a Turkish decision to intervene on behalf of Assad's opponents risks labeling Turkey as a regional champion of Sunni Arabs, despite Turkish efforts to define the Syrian crisis as a humanitarian issue rather than a sectarian one. Although Turkey and the United States have called for Assad's removal, the incumbent president is not the **center of gravity**, in Clausewitzian terms, of the war, as Maummar Qaddafi was in Libya. Whereas Qaddafi's death ended his unique regime, in Syria the regime's power resides with the security,

business, and political elites. This system of collective rule, which has a sectarian orientation due to the large numbers of minority Alawites among the elite, could easily result in a continuation of Assad's policies even if the incumbent president leaves office.

The Turkish authorities have allowed members of the opposition Syrian National Council and the Free Syrian Army to organize on Turkish territory, but the disunity of the Syrian opposition factions remains a problem. Even many Syrians are reluctant to embrace these opposition bodies for fear that they will become dominated by Sunni extremists. Although Turkish and U.S. officials have sought to purge al-Qaeda operatives from their ranks, the Turkish authorities have proven less sensitive to the concerns of Syria's non-Sunni ethnic and sectarian groups. Turkish and U.S. officials have long been considering the option of establishing a border buffer zone or safe areas deeper inside Syrian territory, where refugees could find safe shelter without entering Turkish territory. But the experience in the Balkans in the 1990s made clear that, unless backed by air strikes and robust ground forces, the adversary will not respect these safe havens.

Both governments would like to avert further civil strife and achieve a rapid transition to a stable and prosperous Syria under a new government. They also want to prevent extremist groups from exploiting the chaotic situation to break Syria apart or transform the country into a terrorist safe haven. U.S. officials share Turkish worries about the adverse regional repercussions for Kurdish autonomy in Syria. If Assad is overthrown and the Syrian state disintegrates, then the Iraqi government and state might soon follow, creating the possibility of greater ties among Kurds in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and potentially Iran. Turkish

leaders note that a continuation of the Syrian fighting, which has already spread to parts of Lebanon, risks provoking a wider sectarian war that will hurt Turkey even if its troops refrain from directly intervening in Syria. Meanwhile, the Kurds in Syria are gaining the kind of autonomy enjoyed until now only by the Kurds of northern Iraq. In order to concentrate Syrian forces elsewhere, the regime has withdrawn its troops from Kurdish-dominated towns in northern Syria and allowed a major Syrian Kurdish movement, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), to take charge of municipal administration to prevent the Syrian Free Army from seizing the region.<sup>96</sup> Turkish officials suspect the PYD of having links with the PKK. Erdoğan warned that, “We will not allow the terrorist organization to pose a threat to Turkey in Syria; it is impossible for us to tolerate the PKK’s cooperation with the PYD.”<sup>97</sup> U.S. officials are also worried about the adverse regional repercussions for Kurdish autonomy in Syria. If Assad is overthrown and the Syrian state disintegrates, then the Iraqi government and state might soon follow, creating the possibility of greater ties among Kurds in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and potentially Iran. U.S. officials join Turks in asserting that:

we are equally clear that we don’t see for the future of Syria an autonomous Kurdish area or territory; we want to see a Syria that remains united . . . any movement towards autonomy or separatism . . . would be a slippery slope.<sup>98</sup>

Given the reluctance to employ direct military force against Syria, the Turkish and U.S. governments favor less costly options that nonetheless go beyond the current sanctions. The United States and several European governments have been providing com-

munications equipment, training, and other forms of nonlethal assistance to the guerrillas. Some Gulf countries reportedly are supplying weapons as well as fighters and trainers. As a result, the Assad regime has remained in power thanks to even greater support from Russia, Iran, and Lebanon's Hezbollah, whose decision last year to send large numbers of armed fighters to Syria saved Assad at a critical time in the war. The Syrian regime has skillfully polarized the conflict to exploit popular fears that an insurgent victory would result in Sunni extremists dominating the new regime, which would suppress Syria's non-Sunni minorities and transform the country into a Taliban-style regime and an al-Qaeda bridgehead.<sup>99</sup> The opposition has been divided into feuding political leaders and indeed depends on al-Qaeda-affiliated groups for its best fighters. Since neither Turkey nor the United States is prepared to send large numbers of ground forces to Syria to attain these goals, they are increasing the likelihood of post-Assad civil strife in Syria, with adverse consequences for neighboring countries.

The Syrian conflict has had an ambiguous impact on Turkish-U.S. relations. It has directed their policymakers to focus on strategic issues at a time when both sides are eager to diversify the partnership. Since the Syrian Civil War, Ankara and Washington have been preoccupied with harmonizing their Middle East and Syria policies. The conflict presents both countries with the prospect of relying on a weak, divided, and increasingly extremist guerrilla force, or using their own forces directly in Syria, which would entail a difficult post-conflict stabilization and probable state-building missions. For the past few years, Turkey and the United States have undertaken many limited measures designed to remove the Assad gov-

ernment, but none have succeeded. They have pursued the relatively low-cost policy option of seeking to induce Assad to give up voluntarily in some form of managed political transition to a broader and more representative regime. Yet their efforts to organize a credible Syrian government-in-exile have been frustrated by divisions and jealousies among Assad's opponents. With extensive Turkish backing, the military opposition has grown stronger, but has proved unable to achieve decisive victories. If anything, the military balance has shifted in favor of the Syrian government, though Assad's forces lack the strength to win the war quickly.

Neither the Turkish nor the U.S. governments have considered Assad's removal a sufficiently vital national interest as to warrant the use of their own troops in Syria. Turkey would like the Pentagon to do it, but U.S. policy has focused on keeping the conflict largely contained within Syria, which has succeeded thus far, and more recently securing the elimination of all its chemical weapons. U.S. policymakers have increasingly recognized the dangers of repeating past policy failures in Syria. As in 1979, the United States risks replacing an odious dictator who nonetheless has not threatened core U.S. national security interests with an extremist religious regime whose members would be ideologically prone to attack the United States and its regional allies in Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon. As in the 1980s when Washington inadvertently allowed al-Qaeda to exploit the war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan to develop a powerful regional base and network, in Syria the United States risks the transformation of a popular uprising against an unfriendly regime into a Sunni-defined jihad that could easily extend against American and other Western targets.



At worst, a Taliban-like regime will take power in Damascus and encourage the new al-Qaeda linked network of Syrian fighters and their foreign supporters to extend their guerrilla campaign to neighboring countries. Removing Assad is also not a critical vital interest for the United States. Washington has lived with the Assad dynasty for decades and can probably continue to do so. Assad's removal could weaken Tehran's influence in the Middle East, but would neither prevent Iran's acquiring nuclear weapons nor necessarily facilitate an Arab-Israel peace agreement. The Assad regime may miscalculate and finally force Ankara's or Washington's hands, but the most likely scenario for the next few years is a continuation of the current crisis, with the possibility of a renewed Ankara-Washington rift.

Turkish leaders would have liked to see more vigorous actions by the Obama administration against the Assad government. In an interview with *The Washington Post*, President Abdullah Gül stated that he did not see the U.S.-Russia framework agreement on eliminating Syria's chemical weapons as leading to a comprehensive solution to the crisis. He also implied that dealing with Assad to secure their elimination was immoral, given Assad's crimes; only his overthrow would bring an enduring solution to the country's security threats.<sup>100</sup> That the United States and Russia reached the Syrian agreement without Turkey's participation, let alone consent, likely reinforced Turkish animosity to the agreement. In a reversal of the Iraq situation a decade ago, the beleaguered Turkish government has increasingly pressed the United States to adopt a more assertive stance in a neighboring Arab country. Turkish officials have called for arming the rebels, establishing no-fly zones to negate the devas-



tating effects of Syrian air power, and making a greater effort to deny foreign arms shipments to the Syrian government.

In contrast, Washington remains uncomfortable regarding the skills and ideological inclinations of the Syrian insurgents, and tensions have grown between Washington and Ankara over how to handle the extremist element of the Syrian resistance. Although opposed to al-Qaeda, whose affiliates have conducted terrorist attacks inside Turkey against Western and other targets, the Turkish government has allowed Sunni militants a free hand in using its territory to train and equip fighters for the Syrian campaign. Ankara has also permitted Qatar and Saudi Arabia to provide lavish funding for the most extremist factions within the resistance. The narrative advanced by these Gulf monarchies — that what is occurring in Syria is an oppressed Sunni population finally overthrowing an oppressive Iranian-back regime — resonates well among the Sunnis of Syria, Iraq, and even many Turks. Sunni militants in Syria are some of the most effective as well as dogmatic opposition fighters. Iraq's own Sunni militants are obtaining weapons and combat training that they will likely later use against the Baghdad government. Their hope is that, if Assad falls and a Sunni-led regime takes charge in Damascus, then the Iraqi Sunnis will receive even more assistance since they could benefit from the direct support of the new Syrian government as well as the assistance of many returning Syrian veterans and renewed enthusiasm for Sunni-based insurgencies.

Turkish officials continuously have denied the claim that they have supported radical groups like Jabhat al-Nusra, but, until recently, the government in Ankara has turned a blind eye to the issue. An affiliate

of al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra is a Sunni jihadist faction that fights alongside the more moderate Free Syrian Army against the Assad regime. Many of its members are foreigners who are primarily from Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan.<sup>101</sup> However, international pressure combined with fears of domestic blowback has led the government to adjust its strategy toward Syria's extremist groups. For example, the arrests of suspected al-Nusra members in Turkey were followed by deadly car-bombings in Reyhanli.<sup>102</sup> Gül has since stated that these radical groups threatened Turkey's security.<sup>103</sup>

Ankara is especially concerned with the growing presence near its borders of Jabhat al-Nusra and other fighters connected with the al-Qaeda linked Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).<sup>104</sup> A related concern is that the radicals will gain the military upper hand in Syria and attack the moderate opposition, weakening its international support and legitimacy.<sup>105</sup> Turkey has now begun a stricter border control and a more sensitive evaluation of which opposition groups to support. The authorities have been taking measures to prevent Turkish youth from joining radical Islamist groups.<sup>106</sup> The United States should continue to support these efforts, presumably with low-profile Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence assets.

U.S. officials have parried Turkish proposals to consider the option of establishing a border buffer zone or safe areas deeper inside Syrian territory, where refugees could find safe shelter without entering Turkish territory. Turkey created a similar zone in northern Iraq in 1991, which allowed more than a million Iraqi Kurds to escape Saddam Hussein's expected retribution for their failed 1991 uprising after the Kuwait war. Ankara and Washington could also

apply the model used in Iraq and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and create no-fly zones, safe havens, and humanitarian corridors to protect Syrian civilians and accelerate the disintegration of the Syrian army by enticing more military defectors, who could flee to the zone with their families. At one point, Davutoğlu reportedly expressed interest in establishing such a corridor that would extend from the sea, perhaps even to Cyprus, rather than near the Turkish border. But the lesson of the 1990s is that, unless backed by air strikes and robust ground forces, the adversary will not respect these safe havens. Assad's military is considerably stronger than Qaddafi's, so any no-fly zone would need to be robustly enforced. It would need to begin with a preemptive strike against the Syrian military to destroy its planes and helicopters, degrade its ground forces and command and control networks, and weaken the morale of the Syrian forces. Then it would resemble the no-fly zone established over northern and southern Iraq after 1991 by the United States and other NATO governments, which required repeated strikes against Iraqi targets (such as air defense units) to prevent Saddam's forces from re-grouping. It is doubtful that Chinese and Russian governments would provide UN authorization for any such enforcement measures, so the Turkish and U.S. governments would need to justify the measures on the basis of self-defense. U.S. officials point to significant differences between the Libyan and Syrian situations, notably the lack of an authorizing UN resolution as well as greater divisions within the Arab League and NATO about the wisdom of intervening. In the absence of more universal regional support or a more solid backing in international law, U.S. officials are more reluctant to employ force in Syria.

## **Iraq.**

Turkey has several core interests in Iraq: cultivating ties with the various Iraqi factions; preventing the PKK from using northern Iraq as a base of operations; balancing the influence of Iran; securing access to Iraqi oil and other economic opportunities; and generally seeking to promote stability in a key neighboring region. In particular, a mixture of defensive and offensive motives has been driving Turkish policy toward Iraq. The defensive consideration is the conviction among Turkish leaders that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's divisive policies, designed to weaken his rivals for power and rally Shiite partisans behind him, are leading Iraq back toward sectarian civil war. They fear that renewed confrontation could undermine Turkey's economic interests in Iraq, present Ankara with yet another humanitarian crisis on its border, and undermine Turkey's carefully crafted policy of containing Kurdish nationalism in Iraq within tightly constrained limits. Another defensive goal of Turkey is to keep Iranian influence in Iraq limited. Although Ankara has sought to develop better ties with Iraq's Shiite majority, Turkey generally has sought to balance Tehran's use of some Iraqi Shiites as its main local proxies by supporting various Sunni and Kurdish leaders in Iraq. Ankara does not want to wage a proxy battle with Iran on Iraqi soil, but it wants to ensure that a coalition government in which Turkish interests are represented rules Baghdad. Turkish leaders also aim to ensure that Iraqi Kurdistan is governed by leaders that will take Ankara's economic and especially security interests into account. Al-Maliki naturally resents what he sees as Turkish efforts to contain his power and divide and rule parts of Iraq. The Turkish

government has employed several tools in pursuit of these goals in Iraq—diplomatic initiatives, economic ties, and, when necessary, military power.

Turkey suffered security and economic problems as a result of the 2003 Iraq War, but the conflict did enhance Ankara's regional influence by deepening the power vacuum that had emerged after the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The AKP government has filled this vacuum by extending its influence in many neighboring countries in what some observers describe as a "neo-Ottoman" policy, a label rejected by AKP leaders. Turkey's influence in Iraq has grown considerably in recent years as Turkish policymakers have adopted more inclusive policies and as economic and cultural intercourse between Iraqis and Turks has grown. But sources of tension do exist in the relationship. The Turkish military regularly violates Iraqi sovereignty by attacking PKK targets in northern Iraq, sometimes through large cross-border ground invasions. Some Iraqis still suspect that Turkey would like to establish *de facto* control over northern Iraq, which used to belong to the Ottoman Empire. If the situation in Syria stabilizes, then that country rather than Turkey could provide the main oil pipeline conveying Iraqi crude to European markets. Turkey and Iraq have regularly disputed access to water and the management of shared waterways, with Iraqis objecting in the past to various Turkish dam projects that could reduce the flow of water to downstream countries like Iraq and Syria. Should Iraq ever come under the control of a government hostile to Turkey, Ankara could use the KRG as a buffer to shield Turkey from Baghdad as well as a means to exert pressure on Iraqi policies. But Turkish officials have been careful to refrain from discussing such an option for fear of exacerbating wor-

ries that Ankara's real objective is to recover northern Iraq, the former Ottoman vilayet of Mosul.

The United States and some Arab governments have generally encouraged Turkey to expand its presence in Iraq. Not only does Turkey help dilute Iranian influence, but Turkish business activities also generate economic growth and jobs in Iraq, helping the country recover from decades of war and civil strife. Furthermore, many U.S. leaders still see Turkey's Islamic-influenced, but essentially secular, political system as a model of the type of political and social system that could work well in Iraq, with its large Sunni minority and secular tradition, or at least as offering a superior alternative to that of an Iranian-style Shiite autocracy. Even religious Turks such as AKP leaders espouse a moderate form of Sunni Islam that exudes tolerance toward Shiites and other Islamic minorities. This trend is likely to continue as U.S. influence in Iraq declines further in coming years with the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the natural deeper integration of Iraq into mainstream Middle East politics. By helping keep Iraq out of Tehran's orbit and linking Baghdad to the West, Ankara increases its own regional influence and enhances its value as a strategic partner of Washington and Persian Gulf governments.

The nadir of Turkish influence in Iraq occurred after the Anglo-American invasion of March 2003. Despite the offer of billions of dollars of U.S. aid, the Turkish parliament voted against a reluctant proposal by the new AKP government to allow the U.S. military to attack Iraq through Turkey's southeast border during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). Instead, the Pentagon had to spend considerable time repositioning its troops to enter Iraq through its southern border. The George W. Bush administration partly

blamed the Turkish parliament's decision for the subsequent emergence of the anti-Western insurgency in Iraq. In 2005, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld claimed that, "If we had been able to get the 4th infantry Division in from the north through Turkey . . . the insurgency would have been less."<sup>107</sup> By then, Turkish public opinion had turned solidly against Washington's Iraq policies. Turks perceived the U.S. promotion of an autonomous Kurdish quasi-state in northern Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, as inspiring Kurdish separatism in Turkey and providing a *de facto* sanctuary for PKK terrorist attacks on Turkish civilians, which escalated following the Anglo-American invasion. Another source of concern was how Turkey's exclusion from the occupying coalition combined with the tensions between Ankara and Washington had minimized Turkish influence in post-Saddam Iraq.

Since 2007, the Turkish and U.S. Governments have cooperated more effectively with the Turkish military to counter PKK activities in northern Iraq. Before then, Ankara had complained repeatedly that Washington was paying insufficient attention to Turkey's security interests in northern Iraq, especially PKK activities in the KRG. But the deaths of 13 Turkish soldiers in a border clash in October 2007 led the United States to provide intelligence and other assistance to the Turkish military, which conducted air and ground attacks against PKK targets in northern Iraq. The more precise Turkish attacks minimized Kurdish civilian casualties and therefore KRG complaints.<sup>108</sup>

Since then, in line with the AKP's "zero problems" with neighbors policy, Erdoğan, Gül, and other Turkish policymakers have sought to balance unilateral military action with the application of soft power



means of influence in Iraq, primarily by deepening cultural, education, and business ties with Iraqis. In July 2008, Turkey and Iraq signed a joint political declaration that established a high-level strategic cooperation council aimed at establishing a “long-term strategic partnership.” The agreement also calls for joint efforts to prevent terrorists and illegal arms from moving across their border. The council has since served as a discussion forum for the prime ministers and other high-level government officials of both countries. They have met several times a year to improve cooperation regarding energy, security, diplomatic, and economic issues.

The reorientation in Turkey’s policy toward Iraq culminated in Gül’s March 23-24, 2009, trip to Iraq, the first official presidential-level visit to the country in 33 years. The trip also resulted from a sustained Turkish campaign to improve ties with the KRG. In 2009, Turkey opened consulates in Erbil (the KRG capital), Basra, and Mosul – major regional centers of Kurdish, Shiite, and Sunni influence, respectively – in a tangible display of support for a unified Iraq.<sup>109</sup> Within Iraq, Turkish leaders first developed extensive ties with Iraq’s Sunni minority, which until Saddam Hussein’s overthrow in 2003 ruled over Iraq’s other minorities as well as its Shiite majority. Turkey then improved relations with the leaders of Iraq’s Kurdish minority, who prudently distanced themselves from the PKK and embraced the economic opportunities offered by the Kurds.

In addition to reaching out to Iraq’s Sunni and Kurdish minorities, the AKP has also attempted to develop ties with Iraqi Shiites, including reaching out to populist Shiite cleric, Moktada al-Sadr, by training lawmakers belonging to al-Sadr’s party in parliamen-



tary protocol. In addition, a Turkish consortium participated in an \$11 billion renovation project in Sadr City, Baghdad's largest Shiite neighborhood. In October 2009, Turkey opened a consulate in Basra, a Shiite-dominated southern port city and Iraq's only large seaport in a major oil-producing region. To further signal his government's desire to reach out to Iraqi Shiites, Erdoğan became the first modern Turkish leader to attend the Shiite commemoration of Ashura (in December 2010) and visit Imam Ali's tomb in Najaf (in March 2011), one of the most important Shiite sites in Iraq.

During Iraq's March 2010 national elections, Turks generally supported the more secular Iraqi National Movement bloc led by Ayad Allawi rather than the Shiite-dominated State of Law Coalition led by al-Maliki. Turkish officials view al-Maliki less as an Iranian puppet than as an ambitious strongman who has exploited the post-war weakness of competing Iraqi political and social institutions to accrue and exercise near dictatorial powers. Turkish policymakers are also concerned that the new Iraqi government and military are too weak to govern the fissiparous Iraqi state effectively. Turkish policymakers want an Iraqi regime that can keep "peace at home, peace in the world," and not fall under the control of another foreign government, in this case Iran.

The governments of Saudi Arabia and the other conservative Persian Gulf minorities consider Turkey a useful ally for promoting moderate Sunni causes in Iraq against either Sunni extremists belonging to al-Qaeda or Shiite militants backed by Iran. Turkey's relations with many Arab governments have improved in recent years as Turkey has moved toward mainstream Arab positions regarding Israel and other

issues. Al-Maliki and his allies naturally disliked Ankara's interference in their domestic affairs, though Turkey's financial and other support to al-Maliki's opponents was considerably less than that provided by some Persian Gulf monarchies.

Pressure from Turkey, the United States, and other foreign governments during the coalition formation talks did succeed in inducing the Iraqi rivals to form what looked to be a nominally multiparty government in which power is divided between al-Maliki, Allawi, and other Iraqi leaders. But al-Maliki exposed the fractures within the Iraqi government and shattered the facade of unity by trying to arrest Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, the highest-ranking Sunni official in the Iraqi government, on charges of running a terrorist death squad. Al-Maliki then threatened Kurdish leaders after they provided al-Hashemi, who enjoys good ties with Turkey, with sanctuary in the KRG on the grounds that he would not receive a fair trial in Baghdad.<sup>110</sup> Alarmed by the prospects of renewed civil war and Iraq's possible break up, Erdoğan called al-Maliki by phone on January 10 and urged him to reconcile with his colleagues in order to avoid the "irreversible chaos" that would result from renewed ethnic and religious wars among Iraqis, which could engulf other Muslim countries. In response, al-Maliki told the U.S.-sponsored al-Hurra Television network on January 13 that, "Turkey is playing a big role that might bring disaster and civil war to the region, and Turkey will suffer because it has different sects and ethnicities."

The two governments summoned each other's ambassadors to complain about their respective country's behaviors.<sup>111</sup> Later several rockets were fired at the Turkish embassy in Baghdad.<sup>112</sup> No one was hurt, and no one claimed responsibility, but the Turks natu-

rally suspect the incident was a warning orchestrated by al-Maliki's forces. Relations worsened after Turkey gave refuge to Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, who arrived on April 9 and has taken up indefinite residence in a luxury apartment in Istanbul, where he continues to denounce al-Maliki while undergoing medical treatment and enjoying round-the-clock police protection and elite patronage.<sup>113</sup>

Al-Maliki's harsh rhetoric regarding Turkey was partly motivated by his suspicions that Turkey was colluding with his enemies in the United States and various Arab governments against him. His rhetoric about Turkey sharply escalated after Davutoğlu and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton expressed their unease at the situation in Iraq in a February 13, 2012, joint press conference. Clinton stressed that it was important "that the Iraqi Government be an inclusive one in which all Iraqis believe that they have a stake in the future of a united Iraq." She went on to add that:

the foreign minister and I had a good discussion about Iraq and how we can work together to strengthen their democracy, help to settle political differences between various factions.

Clinton pointedly added that:

We encourage Turkey to continue to play an important role in trying to reach out to Baghdad, to many different personalities within the political system, and we've encouraged other nations in the region to do the same. We think Turkey's played a very constructive role. But we share the concern about the need to demonstrate unequivocally a commitment to an inclusive Iraqi Government that represents all Iraqis.

Davutoğlu replied that:

Iraq is the backbone of the stability in our region. If there is no stability in Iraq, there cannot be stability in our region. We have been always saying Iraq is like a small Middle East. We have all sectarian, ethnic communities, religious communities in the Middle East we have in Iraq.

But Davutoğlu went on to insist that:

The welfare of all Iraqis, regardless of their ethnic or sectarian background, that is the only demand of Turkey. . . . We see all Iraqis as our eternal neighbors, brothers and sisters. Their welfare is our welfare. If they have any problem, any pain, it is us, we feel the pain.

Davutoğlu added that the Iraqi constitution requires power sharing among its communities, and that Turkey considers that principle essential for the “success of the Iraqi democracy,” adding that, “If there is a successful Iraqi democracy, that will be a good model for other countries as well.”<sup>114</sup>

The PKK issue has also contributed to the general deterioration in relations between Ankara and Baghdad. Turkish leaders have complained that security along the Iraq-Turkish border has declined and that the PKK has been exploiting this opening to intensify attacks against Turkey. Dozens of Turkish security personnel died in the summer of 2011. On October 29, 2011, the PKK launched its most successful attack to date, killing 24 Turkish soldiers and wounding many more, in an ambush in Hakkari province. In response, around 10,000 Turkish security personnel, including elite special forces units in addition to regular conscripts, engaged in a major military operation in the

border region against the PKK. Although most Turkish forces stayed inside Turkish territory, some 2,000 Turkish troops crossed into northern Iraq to search for and destroy PKK units and facilities. Gül told visiting U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta on December 16, 2011, that Turkey feared its border security situation would worsen now that all U.S. troops were leaving Iraq.<sup>115</sup> Ankara has sought to minimize its costs and rely on Iraqi forces to deal with the PKK fighters inside Iraq. The leaders of both the Iraqi central government and the KRG in northern Iraq have denounced the PKK attacks and not resisted Turkish military operations on their territory, but they lack the means to eliminate the PKK forces in Iraq themselves.

Meanwhile, the Turkish government has encouraged the expansion of Turkish-Iraqi economic ties. In addition to commercial considerations, Turkish officials have sought to make Iraq's economic health depend more on its sustaining good relations with Turkey, which increases Ankara's leverage over Baghdad's policies. Most of Iraqi Kurdistan's trade and foreign investment involves Turkish firms, but even Iraqis located elsewhere understand that Turkey is the most prosperous and industrialized of Iraq's neighbors, offers routes to and from Western markets, and provides an exit to the Mediterranean Sea for Iraqi hydrocarbons.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, economic exchanges with Iraq especially benefit southeastern Turkey, where Turkey's discontented Kurdish population lives. One means of reducing their dissatisfaction is to improve their standard of living.

Between 2003 and 2011, overall yearly bilateral trade between Iraq and Turkey increased from \$940 million to \$11 billion.<sup>117</sup> Iraq has become Turkey's second largest trading partner, after Germany. More

than half of Turkey's trade with Iraq involves the KRG.<sup>118</sup> Turkey's main exports to Iraq include materials, machinery, and construction products, basic food and cleaning materials, and electrical and electronic products. In contrast, about the only items that Turkey imports from Iraq are hydrocarbon products such as crude and fuel oil. In 2009, Turkey began importing oil directly from the KRG after Iraq's central government could not agree on a new oil law due to disputes over revenue sharing and other issues. On August 7, 2007, Turkey and Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding that Iraqi natural gas would be supplied to Turkey and via Turkey to Europe.<sup>119</sup> After Baghdad, politicians failed to agree on a new oil law, Turkey began importing oil directly from the KRG in 2009. The oil pipeline that runs from Kirkuk in Iraq to Ceyhan in Turkey transports one-fourth of Iraq's crude oil exports. The flow assures the authorities in both Kurdistan and beyond considerable revenue, while helping secure Turkey's position as a major energy bridge between the Middle East and Europe. Meanwhile, Turkey is helping Iraq meet its own energy demands. Turkish firms have invested in oil and gas exploration and production projects throughout Iraq. Even excluding the oil sector, Turkey has become Iraq's largest commercial investor. Turkish firms have invested in hotels, housing, and the energy sector in Iraq. These companies provide manufactured goods and other products. By early-2012, 740 Turkish firms had negotiated \$2.5 billion in construction contracts in the KRG alone.<sup>120</sup> Altogether, more than 1,000 Turkish companies had invested in Iraq, concentrated in the construction, irrigation, solid waste management, pharmaceutical, agriculture, and tourism sectors.<sup>121</sup> Turkish firms had undertaken more than \$11 billion

worth of construction projects in Iraq since 2003.<sup>122</sup> Hundreds of Turkish contractors in Iraq are working on approximately \$16 billion worth of projects.<sup>123</sup>

Turkey has sought to exert influence in Iraq by means other than force, economics, and energy. Turkey has been utilizing “soft power” and projecting an image of pop culture over its border.<sup>124</sup> In addition, Turkey helped double the number of out-of-country training opportunities that NATO could offer Iraqis in 2010 for internal security training.<sup>125</sup> In December 2005, Turkey encouraged efforts in Iraq to bring together the Sunni Arab Party representatives and U.S. ambassador in Istanbul, in an effort to head off the burgeoning Sunni-led insurgency.<sup>126</sup> Turkey also hosted programs to train hundreds of Iraqi politicians in democratization for all of Iraq’s various ethnic and sectarian political parties.<sup>127</sup> In August 2009, Davutoğlu unsuccessfully sought to mediate between Iraq and Syria after Iraqi officials blamed the Syrian government for helping several massive bombings in Baghdad’s Green Zone. Nonetheless, the recurring Turkish military interventions in northern Iraq underscore that Turkey still relies on military power as its ultimate security guarantee in northern Iraq.

### **Kurdish Connections.**

In their conflicts with Baghdad, Turkish policymakers have had what a few years earlier would have been a surprising ally: Iraq’s Kurds. Turkey enjoys considerable support and influence in northern Iraq due to its deep cultural, education, and especially business presence there. Previously Ankara refused to deal with the KRG, but now Turkish officials strive to cooperate with it. One senior Turkish Foreign Ministry official argued that:

Turkey has no problems with Iraq and Syria, but has problems with al-Maliki and al-Assad's policies. Our relations with the rest of the region and with many partners are in their best state for years.<sup>128</sup>

Although Turkey's outreach effort has failed to make much progress with respect to Iraq's Sunnis, Ankara has become the dominant actor in northern Iraq. The year 2009 saw a major change in Turkey's approach to the KRG. Before then, Turkey had eschewed official contact with the KRG based in Ebril and sought to constrain its autonomy and regional influence. Ankara feared that the KRG's emergence as a quasi-independent state would encourage separatist tendencies among Turkey's own Kurdish minority, estimated to number as much as 20 percent of the population. Instead, the Turkish authorities pursued their interests within Iraq primarily by engaging with the occupying powers and, as it gained more influence, Iraq's central government in Baghdad. This latter approach was similar to how Ankara worked in the past with Iraq to contain Kurdish influence. But this strategy, while yielding gains in the 1960s and 1970s, has proved less effective since the 1991 establishment of a Kurdish autonomous region and especially since 2003 due to the decentralized nature of political authority in post-Saddam Iraq.

Attempts to use the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITC), established in 1995 to consolidate several smaller political parties and therefore strengthen the influence of Iraq's Turkmen minority, as a local proxy also failed to yield major benefits. Ankara has backed Turkmen objections to the incorporation of the city or region of Kirkuk into the KRG since having control of the area's



oil resources would bolster the KRG's wealth and autonomy, and perhaps embolden its leaders to declare independence.<sup>129</sup> Although the local Turkmen are eager to partner with Ankara, Baghdad, and Iran (many are Shiites) to contest Kurdish influence in Kirkuk and other areas, they lack much political strength and have been able to elect only a couple of members to the Iraqi national parliament in each election. As a result, Ankara found itself with little influence in northern Iraq despite that border region's vital importance to Turkey's security.

In 2009, the Turkish government reversed course and adopted a more flexible and embracing policy toward the KRG as well as its own Kurdish minority. After having for years avoided direct contact with the KRG, whose existence Turkish nationalists feared would encourage separatist sentiments among their own Kurds, Turkey now engages directly with the KRG, which still enjoys considerable autonomy but whose leaders have committed to remaining part of a unified Iraqi state and to suppressing PKK operations in their area of control. KRG pressure reportedly contributed to the PKK's decision to declare a ceasefire in August 2011.<sup>130</sup>

For their part, Turkish officials currently prefer a strong KRG that has the power to control its border and internal security, promote economic development that provides opportunities for Turkish traders and investors, and provides Kurds with an alternative successful model to that of supporting the PKK. Many Kurds in Turkey as well as Iraq support the KRG as their best means of achieving limited autonomy in a situation in which Kurds cannot establish an independent country. Turkey's 2010 opening of a consulate in Erbil signified Turkey's new approach by recognizing

the KRG as a core constituent element within the federal state of Iraq. Turkish officials have also developed ties with moderate Kurdish leaders such as Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and KRG President Massoud Barzani, who regularly visit Ankara as honored guests. Ankara's elevated role in the KRG has also enhanced Turkey's influence in Baghdad since Turkey has become the most powerful foreign actor in a region of vital importance to the Iraqi government.<sup>131</sup>

Although Turkey's overall economic exchanges with Iraq have increased considerably in recent years, its economic presence has become particularly prominent in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially its trade, energy, and construction sectors. In the KRG, 80 percent of goods sold are imported from Turkey.<sup>132</sup> The border between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan has never been more open, as 1,500 trucks daily pass through the 26-lane main border crossing of Ibrahim Khalil. A few years ago, the main Turkish presence in northern Iraq was military. Although some Turkish troops now quietly remain in northern Iraq, Turkey's most visible presence is its pop culture, especially cinema, and Turkish goods. Turkish clothes, furniture, toys, building materials, and other products flood the malls and shops throughout Iraqi Kurdistan.

Turkish investment is also flourishing, with more than half the registered foreign firms operating in Iraqi Kurdistan—almost 800 of the 1,500 registered foreign companies—being Turkish.<sup>133</sup> Many Turkish business leaders see Iraqi Kurdistan as both an area of economic opportunity in itself as well as a transit zone for increasing Turkish trade with more distant regions in the Middle East. If the KRG were a separate country, then it would rank among Turkey's top 10 trading partners.

Turkish political leaders want to strengthen their border security by working with Iraqi Kurdish authorities against the PKK. They also hope that the increased economic exchanges across the border will bring greater prosperity to the traditionally economic backward regions where many of Turkey's Kurds, which constitute one-fifth of Turkey's population, reside. Iraqi Kurds appreciate that their economic development depends heavily on attracting Turkish investment, as well as being able to trade with Turkey and beyond, by means by transiting Turkish territory. The KRG is landlocked, and Turkey offers the optimal connecting route to European markets. During a June 2010 trip to Turkey, Barzani observed that, "Turkey is a gateway for us to Europe as we are a gateway for Turkey to Iraq and the Gulf countries."<sup>134</sup> Kurds attribute several Turkish advantages, including lower prices and more flexible contract terms than other foreign sellers.<sup>135</sup>

Ironically, Kurdish nationalism now has also been encouraging Kurdish-Turkish reconciliation. Iraqi Kurds appreciate that, under current conditions, they can best deepen ties with Turkey's Kurds by having good relations with Turkey. At least for the time being, the possibility of establishing a unified Kurdish political entity is excluded, so keeping the borders as porous as possible is their best option. However, as long as the PKK insurgency persists, it will remain an impediment to deeper cross-border economic and political ties among Kurds and with their neighbors.

Turkey's counterinsurgency operation on both sides of its border with Iraq highlights the recurring problem confronting Turkish governments and military in their fight against Kurdish terrorists: the insurgents' area of operations, like the Kurdish population

itself, straddles across Turkey's borders with other countries—namely Iraq, Iran, and Syria. The governments of all four countries share an interest in suppressing Kurdish separatism and violence, but they have also found Kurdish terrorism useful tools to pressure the other countries. These transnational ties mean that, despite their large scale, Turkish military operations cannot suppress the insurgency for long. Its vigorous nature might at best deter further foreign backing for actions by the PKK against Turkey as well as provide the maneuvering room the Turkish government needs to make the concessions required in the new constitution to address Kurdish grievances—but it remains unclear whether the ruling AKP will so use this opportunity.

## **Iran.**

The relationship between Turkey and Iran is fraught with baffling contradictions. One might expect the inherent religiosity of both the AKP and Iran, despite Sunni-Shite theological differences, to sustain good ties, but the contrasts between the Islamic Republican and the “Turkish Model” have resulted in an acute rivalry during the Arab uprisings, as both have held themselves out as a paradigm of Islamic democracy. At first, the presence of two overtly Islamist parties in charge of Ankara and Tehran encouraged a Turkish-Iranian reconciliation, but then their religious orientations became a source of their divisions. Turkey's secular political parties and national security establishment, which dominated Turkey's foreign policy until a decade ago, generally perceived Turkey's Islamic neighbors, Iran and Syria, as potential threats, and sought to develop security ties with Israel, the other important non-Muslim state in the Middle East.

The Islamic orientation of the ruling AKP has meant that current Turkish and Iranian leaders now share a common devotion to Islam and animus toward Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. However, the religious element, which had previously buoyed the relations between the two, became a source of division as Erdoğan began to displace President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and other prominent Iranians as the most popular Muslim leader among the Arab masses due to the AKP's public attacks on Israel and their support for various pro-Palestinian initiatives such as the controversial "freedom flotillas" seeking to defy Israel's blockade of Gaza.<sup>136</sup> During his triumphant tour to Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia in September 2011 and at other times, Erdoğan recommended that the new regimes in the Arab world follow Turkey's secular democratic model, whereas Iranian government representatives have told them to establish an Islamic Republic, as in Iran.<sup>137</sup> Since then, their religious devotion has become an even more direct source of tensions as Turkish leaders have backed Sunni opponents of Shiite governments (as in Iraq and Syria) and Sunni governments facing mass Shiite opposition supported by Iran (as in Bahrain).<sup>138</sup>

The AKP deviated from Washington's policy regarding Iran's nuclear program, though its approach has corresponded to the mainstream international view. While Turkish officials do not want the Islamic Republic to obtain nuclear weapons—members of Turkey's still influential military establishment have suggested that Turkey would rapidly follow Iran in acquiring nuclear weapons for reasons of security and prestige—Turkish officials do not object to Iran's pursuit of limited nuclear energy activities under appropriate international monitoring. The current Turkish

government insists that any country should have the right to engage in all civilian nuclear activities, including uranium enrichment and the other phases of the cycle needed to produce nuclear fuel, provided it applies traditional IAEA safeguards and complies with other nonproliferation norms.<sup>139</sup>

In contrast, most of Turkey's NATO allies remain adamant that Iran must cease enriching uranium or engaging in other sensitive nuclear activities until Tehran convinces the international community that its nuclear program has only peaceful purposes. Turkish leaders have sought to mediate the nuclear dispute between Tehran and the West. In 2010, they worked with Brazil to achieve a confidence-building exchange of enriched uranium between the parties. Months of diplomatic efforts by Erdoğan and President Lula Inacio da Silva of Brazil to mediate the Iranian nuclear dispute appeared to achieve results when they announced an agreement in Tehran on May 17. In their trilateral statement, the three governments declared that Iran was prepared to "deposit" 1,200 kilograms (kg) of its low-enriched uranium in Turkey in return for the delivery within 1 year of 120-kg of uranium enriched to the higher level needed for Tehran's medical research reactor.<sup>140</sup> After the West rejected that proposal, Turkey's initial reaction was to stand behind the Tehran accord. Turkish officials claimed that Obama and other U.S. officials had earlier supported their initiative, though in retrospect they may have failed to give it proper attention due to an expectation that it had little chance of success.<sup>141</sup>

In the months of recriminations that followed, Turkish officials denounced what they described as the hypocrisy of Western governments in approaching nonproliferation issues. They said that these coun-

tries repeatedly have sought to sanction Iran despite its government's signing the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the absence of any concrete proof that Iranians are seeking nuclear weapons.<sup>142</sup> In addition, they have made special deals with India despite the Indian government's refusal to adhere to the NPT. Erdoğan was especially incensed by what he saw as the West's deliberately overlooking Israel's nuclear weapons program. Turkey wants to prevent other countries, such as Israel, from employing—or threatening to employ—force against Iran to attack its nuclear facilities. Turkish officials consider counterproductive the “dual-track” approach adopted by Western countries toward Iran—combining offers of cooperation with threats of attack and sanctions. Instead, they argue that the best way to prevent Iran from seeking nuclear weapons is to address the underlying sources of insecurity that might induce Tehran to seek them. Rather than rely on threats and sanctions, they want to offer Iran security pledges in return for reciprocal Iranian guarantees that Tehran will not use its nuclear activities for military purposes.

Accordingly, Turkish officials have generally opposed sanctioning Iran.<sup>143</sup> First, Iran is Turkey's second largest supplier of natural gas.<sup>144</sup> Turkey is not blessed with sufficient energy resources to meet its needs and cannot afford to cut trade ties with one of its most significant energy partners. Turkish policymakers have felt obliged to accept the mandatory sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council, but they have tried to resist applying the supplementary sanctions adopted by Western governments, which include not purchasing Iranian energy or selling Iran precious metals.<sup>145</sup> Turkey currently imports about 25 million cubic meters of natural gas per day from Iran through

a direct pipeline.<sup>146</sup> This flow amounts to almost one-third of Turkey's total annual gas consumption and helps balance Turkey's energy dependence on Russia, which provides Turkey with most of its gas, some oil, and is building Turkey's first nuclear power plant.

Second, the people of Turkey and Iran have a broad cultural and historical relationship. One-third of Iranians are Azeri Turks, and Tehran is the second-largest Turkish-speaking city in the world. Turks are therefore reluctant to support sanctions that harm the Iranian people.<sup>147</sup> In the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, Turkish officials had reservations about imposing economic and other sanctions against Iran by the UN Security Council or by individual countries, which severely hurts Iran's neighbors and key economic partners, including Turkey. Rather than rely on threats and sanctions, Turks urge the United States and its allies to offer Iran security pledges in return for reciprocal Iranian guarantees that Tehran will not use its nuclear activities for military purposes. These Turkish-U.S. differences, currently overshadowed by Turkish-Iranian divergences over Iraq and especially Syria, could become more serious in the future. Turkey might also change its benign nuclear weapons policies in coming years. Most obviously, unambiguous evidence could arise that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons, which some Turks have said would require Turkey, refusing to accept military inferiority regarding Iran, to do likewise. Turkey's plans to expand its domestic nuclear energy program would, for the first time, provide its government with the scientific, technical, and industrial foundations to pursue genuine nuclear weapons options, as Iran's own development of the capacity to make nuclear weapons has demonstrated to Ankara and others.



In September 2011, Turkey committed to host a U.S. AN/TPY-2 ballistic missile defense (BMD) early warning radar at Malatya as part of NATO's defense against Iran's growing missile capabilities. Turkey made the controversial decision to reinforce Ankara's security ties with the West despite Iranian objections. The decision was both presented and facilitated by the restructuring of the U.S. missile defense architecture in Europe by the Obama administration, which relocated the initial U.S. deployments out of East Central Europe and toward the Balkans, Black Sea, and eastern Mediterranean regions. The new structure, with the interceptor missiles based in Romania and on nearby U.S. warships, offers Turkey greater BMD coverage as well as the opportunity, though publicly unsought, to play a major role in that architecture. Despite Turkish lobbying not to identify Iran as the main target of the NATO BMD network, Iranian leaders and media clearly consider the decision to host the radar in the face of Iranian and Russian opposition an unfriendly act.<sup>148</sup> But the decision has proven useful in silencing Western critics of the AKP's Eastern orientation and has been overshadowed by the more serious differences between Ankara and Tehran regarding Syria.

The same pattern of initial reconciliation followed by renewed divisions has occurred with respect to other regional security issues. In addition to renouncing security ties with Israel, the AKP pleased Iran by seeking to reconcile with its Syrian ally, President Bashar al-Assad. In the process, the new leaders in Turkey managed to dampen Syrian support for the PKK, a policy that Tehran soon followed. Turkey and Iran each have large Kurdish minorities (some 14 million Kurds live in Turkey and approximately 5 million live in Iran) whose members sometimes are so dissat-

isfied with the policies of their central governments that they engage in anti-regime terrorism. Turkey and Iran each face major Kurdish terrorist groups based in Iraq. Besides the anti-Ankara PKK, the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) has attacked Iranian targets from its strongholds in Iraq's Qandil mountain range.

A few years ago, Turkish and Iranian authorities began exchanging counterterrorist intelligence and coordinating military strikes against Kurdish terrorists in northern Iraq.<sup>149</sup> But more recently, the AKP has supported Assad's opponents, irritating Tehran in the process.<sup>150</sup> Although a few years ago the AKP was able to overcome decades of confrontation and develop good ties with the Syrian government, the regime's brutal killing of thousands of protesters has led the AKP officials to support Syrian opposition forces seeking to change the current regime.<sup>151</sup> Iranian leaders have complained about Turkey's becoming the main regional backer of the armed opposition seeking to overthrow Assad. Iranians consider preserving a friendly regime in Damascus a vital national interest for Iran.<sup>152</sup>

A more recent dispute has been Turkey's successful appeal in November 2012 that NATO deploy Patriot air defense systems on Turkish soil to defend Turkish territory against Syrian air and missile strikes. Iranian analysts fear the Patriots could serve as the basis of a no-fly zone that would deprive the Assad regime of one of its few advantages over the insurgents. Ahmadinejad canceled a planned visit to Turkey that December, which the Iranian media said was in protest to the deployments.<sup>153</sup> Turkey has also declined to send high-level officials to events in Iran, such as the 2012 Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Tehran.

Furthermore, it seems that some Iranian support has resumed to the PKK, which also receives help from Assad's regime. PKK military leader Cemil Bayik, who has close ties to Iranian hardliners, has been one of the most vocal opponents of peace talks with the Turkish government. He has pledged to defend Iran and Syria from alleged Turkish plots to change their regimes. Earlier media reports claimed that Iranian authorities had briefly "detained" PKK leader, Murat Karayilan, when Iranian officials learned of impending Turkish air strikes against his PKK camps. The Iranians supposedly then released Karayilan when the bombing ended rather than remand him to Turkish custody. Turks speculated that Iranian authorities wanted to keep Karayilan and the PKK active as a potential source of leverage or a bargaining chip with Turkey.<sup>154</sup>

Turkish-Iranian differences regarding Iraq have also become a major source of bilateral tension. Most Turkish officials do not want Iran to dominate Iraq. They fear that Iranian leaders seek a weak and divided Iraq that is unable to contest Tehran's drive for regional primacy. They also perceive Iran as wanting a subservient Shiite coalition to rule Baghdad that would not resist Iranian political and economic control over Iraq. In contrast, Turkey favors a strong but democratic Iraqi state ruled by a coalition of political forces that can maintain domestic stability as well as contribute to regional security.<sup>155</sup> These conditions would be favorable for reviving Iraq's hydrocarbon production, which would benefit Turkey as a key transit state for Iraqi oil and gas, and restoring Iraqi economic growth, which would support Turkish investors and traders.

These different strategic visions have seen Turkish and Iranian groups often back opposing political forces in Iraq. Even the nuclear issue has lost its ability

to sustain good Turkey-Iran ties. Ankara gained some credit in Tehran in 2010, when it sought to galvanize a confidence-building agreement between Iran and the West over its nuclear mediation. Turks have since expressed irritation at Iranian ingratitude for their efforts to mediate between Tehran and the West. Iranian carping often includes threats as well as criticisms.<sup>156</sup> Erdoğan has since stopped accepting at face value Iranian pledges never to develop nuclear weapons, telling an American journal that Turkey would feel compelled to seek nuclear weapons, too, if Iran ever acquired them. Iran subsequently proposed Kazakhstan and other countries as suitable hosts for holding future rounds of the Iranian nuclear negotiations, excluding Turkey.<sup>157</sup>

The economic ties between the two are deep, even though Iran has proven to be an unreliable partner and a graveyard of Turkish investment capital. Trade between the two is large – Turkey-Iran trade rose above \$10 billion in 2011 and now exceeds \$15 billion.<sup>158</sup> The two parties even have agreed to start using their own currencies in their bilateral commerce to help achieve their goal of tripling Iran-Turkey trade to \$30 billion within a few years.<sup>159</sup> But trade with Iran is frustrating for Turkish entrepreneurs. Many deals announced with great fanfare never pan out – a pattern one sees in Iran’s relations with many other countries. As such, Turkey is making progress in having Azerbaijan, Iraq, and eventually Turkmenistan replace Iran as major suppliers of gas and oil.<sup>160</sup>

Iran’s role in the Turkish economy looks set to decline further as Turks deepen their ties with the more dynamic economies in Asia and elsewhere. Turkish and Iranian officials have discussed arrangements whereby natural gas from Iran and Turkmenistan

could flow to European markets via Turkey.<sup>161</sup> But U.S. officials have criticized Turkey's energy and economic ties with Iran, which Washington has been seeking to isolate. UN, U.S., and European sanctions forced the Turkish Petroleum International Co. to abandon a \$7 billion deal to develop a part of Iran's enormous South Pars field.<sup>162</sup>

Although Turkey consistently has voiced opposition to sanctions against Tehran, the country has at times benefited from those sanctions, which have eliminated competition from other foreign firms that Turkish businesses would have to contend with in a sanctions-free environment. Furthermore, UN sanctions prohibit countries from paying for Iranian goods in dollars or euros, which forces Iran to use any earnings to buy local goods such as food and medicine rather than purchase nuclear-related equipment with hard currency. But the Turkish authorities have tolerated a "gas-for-gold" sanctions-circumventing scheme whereby Iran has used Turkish lira to purchase gold that Iranians can sell elsewhere in exchange for Western currency. The corruption scandal that came to light in December 2013 revealed the Turkish government allowed the state-owned Halkbank to circumvent the sanctions by exploiting the loophole that permitted Turkey to pay for Iranian energy imports with gold.<sup>163</sup>

The renewed Turkish-Iranian tensions of recent years mark a regression to the historic pattern for their relationship. Clashes between the imperial ambitions of the Turkish-centered Ottoman Empire and the Safavid Persian dynasties shaped regional politics for centuries. Relations between Ankara and Tehran were strained even during the 1990s. Turkey's strongly secular leaders accused Iranians of seeking to promote religious fundamentalism in Turkey and other

countries; Iranians criticized Turkey's strict rules against religious expression, such as the banning of headscarves in public institutions. Turks opposed the Iranian practice of rule by clerics while Iranians criticized military rule in Turkey. Both governments suspected the other of promoting terrorist and separatist movements against them. Turkey and Iran also have diverging interests in Central Asia. Both would like to increase their influence in a region where they were the dominant players in previous centuries. Ankara is particularly drawn to the Turkic nations, whereas Iran feels closest to Tajikistan. It has only been in the last decade that Turkey, under AKP rule, has improved its relations with the Iranian government, and some early gains have more recently been reversed.

Iranian leaders have resisted breaking entirely with Turkey. They already have enough potential adversaries and lack any genuine allies, so having a powerful neighbor that opposes using force against Iran is still a great advantage. Turkey and Iran have not fought a war since the 17th century, and the popular mood in both countries is against another bilateral armed conflict any time soon. In public, influential Iranians have been attributing some of their tensions with Turkey to U.S. machinations and Western plots. Iranians want Turkey to continue to refrain from sending their own military forces into Syria. Without them, the Assad regime might survive for years in a stalemated civil war, with the opportunity growing over time that a new Turkish government might come to power.

Meanwhile, Turkey and Iran are establishing a joint university, a joint economic commission, and more transit and border terminals.<sup>164</sup> Even beyond economic ties, Turkish leaders fear that isolating and threatening Tehran could further radicalize Iranian

foreign policy, which, at least in regards to Turkey, has been rather pragmatic. An alienated Iranian government might deepen its ties with terrorist organizations, intervene more deeply in Iraq and Afghanistan, and take other actions designed to retaliate against the United States and its allies, like Turkey. A war between Iran and the West would prove disastrous since Turkey's regional interests would severely suffer, as they did during the confrontation between the West and Saddam Hussein's Iraq.<sup>165</sup> Turkey suffered heavy economic losses during the years in which the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Saddam Hussein's government and then as a result of the Western invasion of the country. The losses from a war today involving Iran would be even greater.

Nonetheless, the Turkey-Iran relationship is primed for problems due to their differing geopolitical and sectarian interests. They have already resumed their historic pattern of eschewing direct wars by competing against one another by proxy in Iraq, Syria, and Azerbaijan. After decades in which one or the other country was clearly dominant, we now have a dangerous equipoise in which both these non-Arab regimes consider themselves rising powers that deserve preeminent say in the region. But by definition, at most only one of them can gain that primacy.

## EURASIA

Although many earlier successes of the AKP's zero problems policy have failed to endure, Turkey's relations with Russia, Central Asia, China, and even Afghanistan are still better than a decade ago. Turkey's relations with Russia are generally good despite dif-

ferences over Syria, the South Caucasus, Turkey's dependence on Russian energy, Moscow's noncompliance with the CFE Treaty, and other issues. Thanks to their ties with NATO and the United States, Turkish policymakers have been able to accept these differences with general nonchalance. Moscow has not become overly irritated by Turkey's confrontations with Syria, Moscow's main client in the Middle East, or Turkey's support for NATO's missile defense architecture in Europe. Turkey has likewise accepted Moscow's moves to establish a Eurasian economic bloc with surprising nonchalance. Yet, differences over Syria, and now the Crimea, confront Turkey's Russia policy with its most serious challenge in decades. For now, the improved relationship with Russia has also enabled Turkey to better support U.S. goals in Central Asia. Russia no longer fears Ankara's influence in Central Asia and might even welcome a Turkish presence to help counterbalance China's growing presence in the region. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Turkey has strived to carve out a space for itself in the Central Asian region, among its Turkic brother-nations. Turkish involvement in the region increased tremendously with the War in Afghanistan, which Turkey has supported and participated in with vigor and enthusiasm. Turkey has spearheaded mediation efforts in the region, particularly between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Through the 1990s, Russia countered Ankara's efforts to exert influence in the region, and only in recent years has Turkey been able to expand its cooperation with former Soviet Central Asian nations beyond a strictly cultural context. Turkish firms have begun to dominate in the region in many sectors, from banking, to telecommunications, food processing, and textiles. Erdoğan, having failed to overcome the impasse that



currently hinders EU membership, has courted closer relations with the SCO as a means of exercising influence in Central Asia. Turkey has recently attained the status of “dialogue partner,” but there are significant obstacles to fuller membership, and major doubts as to the degree to which the SCO, with its limited economic and security capabilities, could replace the EU and NATO.

## **RUSSIA**

The AKP has pursued better Russian-Turkish relations. The two countries have developed a sustained economic and security partnership, centered on growing tourism, energy flows, and overlapping security concerns in their shared neighborhoods of Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Middle East. Several factors explain the mild Turkish response, limited to declarations of principles and feared consequences. Turkey now receives more than half its natural gas from Russia, as well as large deliveries of oil and support for its planned nuclear energy program. Annual trade now amounts to some \$40 billion. Mutual investment has also grown, with Turkish firms helping construct the Sochi Olympics complex in Russia.<sup>166</sup>

During the past decade under the AKP, Turkish and Russian interests converged more than they differed. Both countries have sought to reduce terrorism, increase oil and gas transit through Turkey, and limit disruptive political upheavals in Central Asia and neighboring regions, given the risks of such chaos spilling across their borders. Neither government wants Iran to obtain nuclear weapons, but both Ankara and Moscow do not object to Iran’s pursuit

of limited nuclear activities under appropriate international monitoring. In addition, Turkey and Russia want to prevent other countries from employing force against Iran to attack its nuclear facilities.

Russian officials no longer evince concern about Turkey's growing economic and cultural presence in Central Asia and, as evidenced by Moscow's low key response to Turkey's decision to host a NATO missile defense radar, no longer consider Turkey a major military threat. Turkey and Russia largely have set aside their Cold War adversarial mindsets in the former Soviet space. The Kremlin, protective against U.S. and West European intrusions, no longer evinces much concern about Turkey's growing economic and cultural presence in the Turkic nations of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Russians may even welcome Turkey's growing economic presence in Central Asia as a means of diluting China's growing economic prowess there. Despite Moscow favoring Armenia and Ankara siding with Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey have managed to keep their differences over the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute under control. Even in the case of Georgia, Turkey has managed to maintain good relations with Tbilisi without antagonizing Moscow, though Turkish efforts to lessen Russia-Georgia antagonisms have largely failed.

The independent policies Ankara pursued toward regional security issues presumably lessened Moscow's concerns about Turkey serving as an anti-Russian stalking-horse for Western interests in the region. Policymakers in both countries have shared the belief that other NATO countries, particularly the United States, have paid insufficient attention to their concerns in these regions. A few years ago, analysts even spoke of an "Axis of the Excluded" between them.<sup>167</sup>

Although Turkey has since strengthened its ties with NATO and the United States, Russian analysts still cultivate Turkey as a rising power. It has a dynamic economy, newly flexible foreign policy, and shares with Russia the experience of being physically part of Europe but practically treated as a peripheral country not suitable for membership in core European clubs such as the EU.<sup>168</sup>

The Black Sea region has represented another geographic region of overlapping mutual concern to both Turkey and Russia. In recent years, Russian-Turkish security cooperation in this area has been sufficiently extensive and exclusionary as to worry the West about the two countries establishing a *de facto* condominium in the region, which represents the main route through which Caspian oil and gas reaches Europe. For example, Moscow and Ankara have worked to limit the presence of Western navies in the Black Sea. In particular, they have resisted Alliance proposals to enlarge the scope of NATO's Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR, currently active in the Mediterranean, into Black Sea waters. Russian policymakers do not want NATO to establish a major military presence in another region neighboring the Russian Federation, while Turkish officials also oppose any steps that might lead to a review of the 1936 Montreux Convention, which grants Turkey special privileges as possessor of the Bosphorus Straits, including the power to limit the size of warships from nonlittoral states that enter the Black Sea.

Since 2006, Russian warships have been participating in Black Sea Harmony, a Turkey-led multinational initiative launched in 2004 designed to counter terrorism, narco-trafficking, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation in the south Black Sea

region by tracking suspicious vessels and conducting security checks on ports.<sup>169</sup> The two navies track vessels and exchange data about possible illegal activities. Russian and Turkish government representatives maintain that Black Sea Harmony and other Russian-Turkish maritime security cooperation, such as the annual exercises of the Black Sea Naval Force involving the riparian states since April 2001, obviate the need to bring NATO's ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR or any other NATO naval presence into the Black Sea region. As Gül put it during his joint February 2009 news conference with then Russian President Dmitrey Medvedev in Moscow:

Russia and Turkey are the two most important countries in the region, which are called upon to make a weighty contribution to ensuring peace, stability, security and cooperation across the region.<sup>170</sup>

Frictions do exist between Ankara and Moscow. Turkey has criticized Russia's decision to suspend implementation of the CFE, whose provisions limit the number of Russian military forces that can be deployed near Turkey and also promote military transparency and restraint throughout the South Caucasus, the scene of one recent war (involving Georgia in 2008) and potentially another (between Armenia and Azerbaijan). Turkish policymakers have sought to maintain "geopolitical pluralism" in post-Soviet Eurasia in general and in the South Caucasus in particular.<sup>171</sup> Preserving "pluralism" involves strengthening the political sovereignty of these countries, countering the growth of Russian influence in the Caucasus (though in a covert rather than overt way), and promoting closer ties between these countries and Euro-Atlantic organizations such as NATO.<sup>172</sup>

In line with its strategy of “making friends” with previously alienated countries, generating opportunities for greater east-west commerce through Turkey, and attempting to avert further instability in the South Caucasus following the Georgia War, the AKP government signed a set of protocols with Armenia in October 2009 that would establish mutual diplomatic relations and reopen their joint border. Pressure from Azerbaijan and its Turkish supporters has generated opposition within the Turkish legislature to ratifying the protocols before Armenia resolves the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, which the Turkish government cited in 1993 as the original reason for closing the border. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev threatened to stop subsidizing the sale of natural gas to Turkey and seek alternative energy export routes should Turkey adopt the protocols while Armenian forces continued to occupy Azerbaijani territory.<sup>173</sup> The Turkish government rapidly backtracked and resumed insisting on a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue before the protocols could enter into effect.

The government of Armenia, which set aside previous demands for Turkey to recognize the 1915 massacres as genocide during the signing ceremony, has been unwilling to make further concessions simply to reestablish relations and reopen its border with Turkey. Turkish diplomats have hoped that Russia, an historical ally of Armenia as well as member of the OSCE Minsk Group, would help promote a reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia. When he met with Putin in January 2010, Erdoğan called on Moscow to play a more active role in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.<sup>174</sup> Yet, Putin declined to commit to exerting any pressure on Armenia, whose parliament must also ratify the protocols, to make concessions

regarding Nagorno-Karabakh in order to secure Turkish parliamentary ratification. When asked about the issue at their joint news conference on January 13, Putin argued that linking the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation with the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute would simply delay progress on both. He stated:

Both the Karabakh and Turkish-Armenian problems are extremely complicated in their own right, and I don't think they should be joined together in a package. Each problem is hard to resolve even taken on its own, and if we lump them together, any hope of their resolution automatically recedes into the distant future.<sup>175</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made similar remarks the following day when he visited Yerevan.<sup>176</sup> Skeptics might suspect that Russian officials are not eager to see a reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia since, while offering the possibility of drawing Azerbaijan and Turkey closer to Russia, the protocols' adoption could reduce Moscow's influence in Armenia and promote the development of new east-west energy and commercial routes through Turkey that circumvent Russian territory. Armenia suspended the parliamentary ratification process for the protocols a few months later.

Russia's decision to use overwhelming force to defeat Georgia in its August 2008 war shocked Turkish policymakers into realizing that their margin for maneuver in Russia's backyard might be smaller than anticipated due to Moscow's new assertiveness.<sup>177</sup> To prevent further regional disorders, Ankara sought to advance a multilateral regional security framework that would both constrain Russia's assertive impulses as well as revitalize efforts to solve the regional

conflicts that might lead to new flareups and further destabilization.<sup>178</sup> Although Turkish leaders traditionally had strongly supported Georgia's territorial integrity and developed strong economic ties with Georgia, Turkish officials restrained their criticism of Moscow's intervention and subsequent dismemberment of Georgia. Turkish representatives instead focused on averting future conflicts by promoting the creation of a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP) that would include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Russia, as well as Turkey. The CSCP would have supplemented the contributions made by other regional security institutions, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whose Minsk Group has sought to address the "frozen conflicts" in the former Soviet republics, and the SCO, with which Turkey is also seeking to develop closer ties. The CSCP also sought to exploit the interests Russia shared with Turkey in promoting sufficient regional stability to allow for a mutually profitable energy corridor between Eurasian energy suppliers and European energy consumers.<sup>179</sup>

In addition to hoping to enlarge Turkey's margin to maneuver in the South Caucasus, Ankara wanted to avoid further conflicts that placed Turkey uneasily between Russia and the Western democracies. Turkey had found it difficult to manage the intense pressure placed on Ankara during the war. In the early days of the conflict, Turkey turned down American requests to send ships through the Turkish Straits into the Black Sea.<sup>180</sup> After Ankara eventually agreed to allow three U.S. ships, as well as some other NATO vessels, the Russian government complained that Turkey was violating the 1936 Montreux Convention, which regulates passage of ships from non-Black Sea states

through the Turkish Straits.<sup>181</sup> More generally, Turkish leaders traditionally have sought to dampen tensions between their neighbors, including those in the Middle East, to avoid disputes that could harm the Turkish economy or otherwise negatively redound on Turkish interests. Russian officials endorsed the proposed platform in principle since, by excluding non-regional actors, it would give Moscow and Ankara a leading role in addressing local security problems. But Western and Georgian disinterest led to the initiative's demise.

Another source of Turkey-Russian tension has been the large and persistent trade imbalance in Russia's favor, despite recurring pledges by both governments to work to change the balance and composition of their trade. The imbalance, which does not characterize Turkey's trade with other major economic partners, results from Turkey's heavy dependence on Russian oil and gas, which accounts for almost three-fourths of Turkey's imports from Russia. Turkey has become one of the largest Russian gas importers and natural gas accounts for the largest proportion of Turkey's annual trade turnover with Russia. Turkey's dependence on Russian energy is a cause of concern among officials in Ankara, leading Ankara to seek to diversify its sources of energy to include suppliers in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and at times Iran (though international sanctions and U.S. pressure have made this difficult). Turkey is also planning to develop civilian nuclear power, though Turkey has partnered with Russia, which offered the best deal, to develop its first nuclear power plant, which will use a third-generation Russian-made reactor. Russia has agreed to pay most of the costs of this construction and accept repayment out of the revenue from the electricity the plant will generate.



In recent years, Syria has become a major sore point between Ankara and Moscow. While Ankara has been demanding that Assad resign, Moscow continues to support his regime. Turkey's leading role in organizing the anti-Assad resistance, Syria's cross-border attacks against Turkish territory and Ankara's decision to force a Syrian plane wrongly suspected of carrying weapons to land for inspection in Turkey after it had left Russia, have strained ties. However, neither government has been willing to break ties over the issue because the two countries still have strong overlapping interests in other areas. Turkey and Russia have been able to compartmentalize their differences over Syria so that they can continue to pursue other dimensions of their improving relationship.<sup>182</sup>

More recently, the March 2014 Crimea crisis has confronted Turkey with the most serious challenge to its Russian policy since the Cold War. Until losing the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-74, the Ottoman Empire held sovereignty over the Crimea, then dominated by a population of Muslim, Turkic-speaking Crimean Tatars who looked to Istanbul for spiritual and other leadership. Joseph Stalin forcefully changed this ethnic balance by accusing the Tatars of collaborating with the German occupation and sending them into exile. It was not until the last days of the Soviet Union that the authorities allowed many Tatars to return.

Today, the peninsula's 300,000 Crimean Tatars represent some 12 percent of the population. Turkey has provided them with special aid programs, and Turkish officials have affirmed that they will protect the Tatars during the present crisis.<sup>183</sup> The Tartars have opposed the Crimean independence referendum and fear that, as part of Putin's Russia, their rights will again be infringed. Representatives of the millions of

Turks of Tartar origin have demanded that Ankara take a strong stand against the illegal territorial transfer.<sup>184</sup> Moscow's proclaimed right to use military force to protect ethnic Russians resembles the pretext Moscow used in more than a dozen wars against the Ottoman Empire, justified by the need to defend Orthodox Christians against Muslim oppressors.

Despite having closer ties with the Crimea than any NATO country, championing the cause of threatened Muslims elsewhere, and being key neighbors and energy partners of both Russia and Ukraine, Turkish officials adopted a surprising low-key response to Moscow's moves against the Crimea. Erdoğan, Davutoğlu, and other Turkish officials have simply called for upholding Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political unity without taking any concrete measures to compel observance of these principles other than call for a coalition government in Ukraine that maintained a foreign policy balanced between Russia and the West. Likewise, though Davutoğlu has warned that Moscow's actions could open a "Pandora's Box" by unfreezing other "frozen conflicts" in the Black Sea region—an allusion to the Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh—Ankara has not launched a new initiative to avert that outcome, as it did after the 2008 Georgia War.

Although the Turkish government has said that it will not recognize the legitimacy of the Crimean referendum, in which the peninsula's residents reportedly overwhelmingly voted to join Russia, Ankara has not followed the United States and the EU in imposing sanctions on Russian officials for backing this maneuver. Davutoğlu has even insisted that Turkey will not let "another power"—perhaps an allusion to the EU or Washington—create a Russia-Turkey conflict

over Crimea, which he insisted was a global crisis that should concern all countries. Searching for ways to de-escalate the crisis, the Foreign Minister has also argued that the West should avoid trying to isolate Moscow and instead should, along with Ukraine, negotiate a mutually acceptable compromise that respected Russian interests.<sup>185</sup>

Diverging domestic considerations have also been paralyzing Ankara's response in the current crisis. The AKP's declining popularity should encourage the government to take a firmer stance toward Moscow to gain popularity among Turkey's nationalists, ethnic Tatars, and Russian-haters. But if Russia retaliated by disrupting gas deliveries and other economic intercourse with Turkey, voters' standard of living would decline at a time when Turkey faces several crucial ballots. In addition, Erdoğan and other Turkish leaders may have viewed the popular revolution in neighboring Ukraine with some unease, given how Turkey has also faced months of unprecedented protests. Putin thus far has been playing Turkey well, keeping Ankara quiet in both the Georgian and Crimean crises, but if he continues to grab former Soviet territories, he may finally drive Turkey to return to its traditional anti-Russian stance, especially in the Black Sea region, just as Ankara has reversed many of the AKP's initially new foreign policies in recent years.

## **CENTRAL ASIA**

Turkey has striven to deepen ties with Central Asia since these formerly Soviet republics became independent countries. Several Central Asian republics have majority populations of ethnic Turkic origin, and all have long engaged in trade and other relations with

Turkey. Since these countries gained independence in 1991, the Turkish government has sought to train and educate their people and provide technical, linguistic, and other assistance to their institutions, from their militaries and governments to their businesses and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Turkish officials also see one of their missions as representing Central Asian interests and views within major international institutions such as the G-20.<sup>186</sup> They therefore encourage Central Asians to convey messages to these institutions' members via Turkey.

To diversify its sources of energy imports further, Turkish officials have been seeking to develop options to transship, and possibly purchase for domestic use, natural gas from Kazakhstan and other Caspian Basin countries. Turkey is interested in serving as a "natural energy bridge" between the supplier countries to Turkey's east and international energy markets to Turkey's north, west, and south. The Central Asian states, desiring to decrease their reliance on Russian-controlled pipelines, have supported this effort. Indeed, Central Asian governments welcome Turkey's growing ties in the region as these times help pursue multivector foreign policies with Western directions, even as other NATO countries reduce their presence in their region.

Turkish analysts and government officials are of two minds regarding future political developments in Central Asia. One group believes that Central Asia is ripe for deep political change through its own version of the Arab Spring. They see the region as the last bastion of one-party authoritarian rule and consider the prospects for its near-term democratization to be high. This group would also welcome a phenomenon like the Arab Spring in the region since they consider the

absence of functioning democracies in most Central Asian countries as a significant problem for Turkish entities. For example, they note that, since all major policies in a dictatorship are determined by a single individual or group, authoritarian governments are prone to make radical changes in policy overnight. In addition, the constraints on most individuals' ability to access information in authoritarian regimes, as well as the legal arbitrariness common in nondemocracies, present major obstacles to domestic and foreign entrepreneurs seeking to run profitable businesses in these countries.

But another group of Turkish experts consider the prospects for Central Asia's near-term democratization to be low because they were more optimistic about these regimes' ability to withstand the kind of political chaos sweeping through the Arab world. They argued that it would take decades for these countries, whose leaders still consist of people who have overwhelmingly developed their political views during the Soviet period, to abandon their Soviet mentality and adopt Western liberal values.

In the view of these Turkish analysts and officials, another constraint on political change in Central Asia was the geographic isolation of these states from other democratic countries as well as their history of authoritarian rule. They argued that Central Asia's democratization would entail a lengthy process requiring the further political and economic evolution of these countries. For example, they believed that these nations' economic development would expand the size of their middle class. In time, these stronger middle classes could provide a foundation for these states' evolution into more democratic regimes, since people having some property want to exert some influence on

government policies that could affect these interests. Conversely, this second group of Turkish officials feared that efforts to rush Central Asia's democratization could easily backfire and lead their rulers to adopt even more repressive domestic politics. Instead, they advocated that, for the time being, Western governments focus on promoting the rule of law and human rights in Central Asia, while hoping that economic development and other modernization trends would eventually lead to more democratic governments in the region.

At present, this second group of Turkish officials seems to have the greater influence on Turkey's policies toward Central Asia. But the onset of revolutionary upheavals in this region could easily shift the balance of influence in favor of the first group more eager and optimistic about the prospects for Central Asian democratization. Despite these differences, both groups of Turkish officials maintained that their country could play some role in Central Asia. Neither has thought Turkey sufficiently powerful to compete with Russia directly for regional influence. Turkish officials recognize Russia's political, military, and economic primacy in the region. They also perceive China as a growing economic power in the region. These officials see Turkey's role in Central Asia mainly in cultural terms, encouraging these Turkic people to learn Turkish and acknowledge their historical affinity with the commonwealth of Turkish nations. They also want Turkish businesses to trade and invest in the region. In practice, the few Turkish companies having a major presence in Central Asia concentrate their activities in certain economic sectors such as construction.

Turkey has also been developing ties with the SCO. The SCO has rapidly become one of Eurasia's

most influential multinational institutions despite its short history. It is also one of the largest (in terms of geographic size and population) regional organizations, with a most comprehensive agenda. When they established the SCO on June 15, 2001, the six founding states (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) adopted a “Declaration on Establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization” that emphasized their adherence to a “Shanghai Spirit” based on “mutual respect for multicivilizations” and other values. The issue of Turkey’s acquiring some kind of formal affiliation with the SCO, the dominant multinational institution in Eurasia, has been under discussion for years, but it was not until 2012 that the SCO governments finally decided to offer Turkey some kind of formal affiliation after Ankara had assured them that Turkey would not be a stalking-horse for NATO in Eurasia.

The June 2012 annual meeting of the SCO heads of state in Beijing, China, designated Turkey a formal “dialogue partner” of the organization. The SCO uses the category for countries that are neither full members nor formal observers (like India, Iran, Pakistan, Mongolia, and now Afghanistan). The 2009 Yekaterinburg summit in Russia granted Belarus and Sri Lanka “dialogue partner” status. These partners cannot sign SCO documents or participate in SCO decisions; they can only offer advice in those areas of cooperation specified in a memorandum negotiated between the SCO and the partner. Designating Turkey a dialogue partner makes imminent sense given Turkey’s long-standing interest in Central Asia, economic influence in that region, and powerful regional military force. Turkish academies and trainers have been working with the Central Asian armed forces since these coun-

tries became independent. Turkey's location astride multiple global hotspots – the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, etc. – gives it significant geopolitical weight. In addition, allowing a NATO member to affiliate with the SCO helps reduce the concerns of some outsiders that the SCO is seeking to construct an alliance of anti-Western autocracies in the heart of Asia.

By making Turkey a dialogue partner and Afghanistan a formal SCO observer, the SCO now has the most comprehensive set of members to address Afghanistan's regional security and economic integration. Turkey has played a major role in enhancing Afghanistan's security and development. Turkey could also help the SCO realize its aspirations to have greater economic impact. Turkey has considerable assets in such sectors as finance, transportation, energy, telecommunications, and construction. Although not yet in the same class as China, India, and Russia, Turkey's booming economy has already propelled Turkey to the ranks of the G-20. Turkey already has some \$11 billion in combined trade and investment in Central Asia, as well as approximately \$1 billion in Eximbank loans and some \$30 billion in contracts to almost 2,000 Turkish firms.

In a January 2013 TV interview, Erdoğan said that he had told Putin that Turkey, after decades of thwarted efforts to join the EU would join the SCO instead if Putin could arrange it. Explaining his opinion, Erdoğan called the SCO "better and more powerful, and we have common values with them," which include Muslim and Turkic ties with these nations.<sup>187</sup> Erdoğan's remark should not really be seen as a great surprise. The Prime Minister has earlier cited supposed Western hostility toward his country and religion. For example, when in Egypt in November 2013,



Erdoğan warned his listeners that “all the West wants is to tear the Islamic world to pieces.”<sup>188</sup>

Political calculations might also be at work. Polls show that Turks have become increasingly frustrated with the EU, and Erdoğan presumably saw no harm in bashing this unpopular target.<sup>189</sup> Although most Turkish commentators also saw the remarks as a gambit to strengthen Ankara’s negotiating leverage with Brussels, a few noted that they resonate well with Turkey’s flexible foreign policy which, under the AKP, has moved Ankara away from its previously strongly Western orientation. The comments also reflect Erdoğan’s sense that Turkey belonged to a different “Islamic civilization” rather than an exclusively Christian one.<sup>190</sup>

Last October, Erdoğan’s chief adviser, İbrahim Kalın, complained of a growing gap between Islamic and Western values and concluded that “the European model of secular democracy, politics, and pluralism seems to have little traction in the Arab and larger Muslim world,” in which he included Turkey.<sup>191</sup> Although many Turks agree that the EU is simply unwilling to accept such a large Muslim-majority country, Erdoğan’s critics, including heads of leading opposition parties, complained that Erdoğan was using the religion issue to avoid uncomfortable questions about EU attacks against his government’s authoritarian tendencies at home.<sup>192</sup> In addition to reflecting a genuine concern about Turkey’s mistreatment by the EU and an effort to gain easy popularity by attacking an unpopular target, Erdoğan and other Turkish leaders see cooperating more with the SCO as an enticing option. Like everyone else, Erdoğan has noticed that, “The economic powers of the world are shifting from west to east.”<sup>193</sup>

In addition to Afghanistan, the main security preoccupation of the SCO thus far has been the “three evils” of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism – all priorities of Turkey’s national security establishment. A strengthening of Islamist radicalism in Central Asia could easily redound negatively in Turkey, while Turkish authorities want to delegitimize Kurdish aspirations for a separate state. Turkey’s border security is constantly challenged by narcotics and human trafficking from Central Asia since Turkish territory provides the most direct land route to rich European markets. The SCO’s preoccupation with fighting Islamist terrorism and ethnic separatism would help the AKP justify its repressive domestic policies, which are claimed to help counter Kurdish terrorism and separatism. Unlike EU governments, SCO members would support whatever repressive means the Turkish authorities deemed necessary.<sup>194</sup>

The SCO provides another means for Turkey to deepen its still modest political engagement with Central Asia, and in a framework acceptable to Russia and other countries that remain wary of neo-Ottoman aspirations regarding the Turkic nations of Central Asia. The Turkish Council, Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries (TÜRKPA), the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSOY), the Turkish Academy and Turkey’s numerous student scholarships have never yielded Ankara much influence in these states. The impact of the Central Asian projects sponsored by the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) has been weakened by the decision to expand its aid recipients to dozens of countries rather than retain its original focus on the newly independent Turkic republics. The educational and cultural outreach efforts sponsored

by the Turkish government and various Turkish NGOs have had limited impact building on the shared ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other bonds between Turkey and these nations. Furthermore, Turkey's new status offers Ankara the prospect of participating in SCO-led diplomatic initiatives regarding Afghanistan or Central Asia and the organization's socioeconomic initiatives, which might extend to the energy realm. If the SCO forms an oil and gas club, then Turkey wants to be one of its members.<sup>195</sup>

Meanwhile, Turkey's leverage with Europe, the United States, and elsewhere might also rise through a deeper affiliation with the SCO. Closer ties would also help counter criticism that the AKP's ambitious policy of zero problems with neighbors has failed to attain enduring results. Although Turkey's ties with Syria, Iraq, and Europe have worsened in recent years, the improvements in Ankara's relations with the SCO members have largely persisted. Deepening ties with the SCO could prove useful for Ankara in promoting its security goals in Afghanistan and Central Asia. And Turkey is now eligible to become a formal observer or full member of the SCO, with enhanced privileges, in the future. Turkish officials have affirmed interest in moving up the membership ladder and becoming a formal observer state of the SCO, though this might not yield any tangible gains in Turkey's involvement in SCO activities given the marginal differences in the rights and privileges of the two categories.<sup>196</sup>

Turkish and SCO officials have since indicated that Turkey could join both the SCO and the EU since they were not exclusive organizations. Nonetheless, joining the SCO would prove easier since there are far fewer parties to convince to grant membership (only the six existing full SCO members); no SCO government has

publicly opposed Turkey's accession as a full member, while France, Austria, and Cyprus openly have opposed Turkey's joining the EU; joining the SCO does not require extensive negotiations on specific chapters like the EU admission process; and public opinion within Europe to Turkey's joining the EU is generally unfavorable, while in the SCO, the governments can make decisions without taking their public opinion into account.

But Turkey also will find it harder to avoid the contradictions that permeate the SCO. Turkish diplomacy has already fallen afoul of the confrontation between SCO observers India and Pakistan, with media commentators in both governments accusing Turkish leaders of not paying sufficient heed to their security interests in Afghanistan. Although currently camouflaged by Turkey's relying on NATO to bolster its security regarding Syria, some NATO officials remain uneasy about the implications of Turkey's eastward drift for Alliance cohesion. Turkey might seek to use its SCO ties as leverage in NATO debates. Turkey will also find it hard to avoid the differences between Beijing and Moscow regarding the SCO's proper role and development. Whereas China would like the SCO to establish a free-trade zone, Russia has sought to sustain barriers that help preserve the privileged status many Russian businesses inherited from the Soviet era. This is especially true in the energy sector, where China is eager to expand its access to Central Asian oil and gas resources traditionally under Russia's control. The differences between China and Russia have contributed to the SCO's not admitting any new full members to its ranks since its founding in 2001.

## **Afghanistan.**

One reason Turkey wants to deepen its ties with the SCO is to expand its diplomatic toolkit regarding Afghanistan, which became a formal SCO observer in 2012. Turkey has undertaken major military, economic, and diplomatic initiatives that underscore Turkey's important role in Afghanistan, which may increase as more NATO troops withdraw from that country.

Turkey's military contributions to Afghanistan have been channeled through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), created by the December 2001 Bonn (Germany) Agreement as a means to provide security while the new post-Taliban government rebuilt Afghanistan's military and police forces.<sup>197</sup> NATO took charge of ISAF in subsequent years and expanded its area of operations in stages until it officially covered all of Afghanistan. An independent U.S.-only command focusing on counterterrorist operations has also operated in Afghanistan. Turkey has twice led ISAF: first between June 2002 and February 2003, and then between February and November 2005.<sup>198</sup> Turkey has also played a major role in various ISAF regional commands and has led the Force's Regional Command Capital in the Kabul region.<sup>199</sup> Turkey extended its command of the ISAF's Kabul region for another year on November 1, 2011.<sup>200</sup> Turkey initially deployed 276 troops into Afghanistan in late-2001 during the post-9/11 coalition military operations in that country, but this figure rose to 1,300 in June 2002, when Turkey assumed command of ISAF and was charged with providing security in Kabul and running the city's international airport. At one point, Turkey had almost 2,000 troops in Afghanistan assigned to various noncombat missions.<sup>201</sup>

While the Turkish government has refused to deploy its troops on explicit counterinsurgency or counterterrorist operations in Afghanistan, its military forces within ISAF have helped train members of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police in these tactics. In this regard, Turkish instructors can draw on the experience the Turkish military has gained in its many years of conducting counterinsurgency and counterterrorist operations against the PKK, al-Qaeda, and other militant groups.<sup>202</sup> Turkish troops serve primarily in the Kabul region, but also in several Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRT) across Afghanistan. In Kabul, Turkish troops trained hundreds of Afghan soldiers and assisted in reconstruction projects. They also patrolled the city to reassure citizens about their security. Turkey also collaborated with other NATO members such as France and Italy in a joint Kabul headquarters to promote security in the capital area. In November 2006, moreover, Turkey established a PRT in Wardak, located 40-km west of Kabul. Its mixed contingent of civilian and military personnel trained the Afghan Police, improved judicial administration, developed public infrastructure, and supported projects aimed at raising the quality of life of the local population.<sup>203</sup>

During Erdoğan's visit to the White House in Washington, DC, on December 7, 2009, President Obama requested that the Turkish government deploy combat troops to Afghanistan. In declining the proposal, Erdoğan and other Turkish officials explained that they wanted to focus Turkey's military contributions on training Afghan security forces, undertaking economic reconstruction projects, and supporting other noncombat missions. Alluding to Turkey's value as a potential mediator between the Afghan govern-

ment and its adversaries, Gül argued that, “If Turkey sends combat forces to Afghanistan, the power that everybody respects—including [the] Taliban—will disappear.”<sup>204</sup> The Obama administration eventually accepted this logic. U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates subsequently stressed to the media that the Obama administration was “extremely pleased with Turkey’s contributions in Afghanistan” because U.S. officials “pay high importance to personnel that can train [Afghan] individuals in the areas of military and security.”<sup>205</sup>

The Turkish government and Turkish NGOs have supported many humanitarian and economic reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. These have included education, health, housing, and infrastructure improvement projects. The Turkish government, with funds from TİKA, has constructed dozens of schools, helping fill a major socioeconomic gap in Afghanistan. TİKA has also helped dig wells to provide citizens with safe drinking water. Turkey’s Greater Anatolian Project (GAP) has supported projects to improve irrigation in the Afghan city of Jalalabad.<sup>206</sup> Turkey has donated much food to Afghanistan through the UN Food and Agricultural Organization and other means. Turks have constructed or rebuilt seven medical clinics in Afghanistan and have supported other health initiatives in that country.<sup>207</sup> Economic considerations have sustained Turkish interest in ending the Afghan conflict. The continued fighting has prevented Afghanistan from joining with Turkey and other countries in providing a Eurasian east-west land route for Central Asian exports to European markets. Turkey aims to become a major transit country for trade between Asia and Europe, but regional insecurity has discouraged foreign investment in east-west railroad, highway, and pipeline projects.



Turkey has complemented its long-standing military and economic contributions to Afghanistan with diplomatic initiatives aimed at creating a favorable environment for an Afghan-led peace process. This focus has dovetailed well with the Obama administration's Afghan-Pak war strategy, which tries to pursue three mutually reinforcing tracks: "fight, talk, and build," signifying the need for a favorable regional diplomatic framework for ending the conflict, along with increased military and economic support for Afghanistan. The administration's "New Silk Road" policy aims to increase economic ties between Afghanistan and its neighbors in the expectations that the economic gains would reduce economic incentives to join regional terrorist and insurgent groups, reduce Afghanistan's dependence on foreign assistance, and promote greater regional cooperation in other areas. Turkey's three contributions also coincide well with the Obama administration's "3-D" (defense, development, and diplomacy) approach toward foreign policy.<sup>208</sup>

Many of Turkey's diplomatic initiatives have concentrated on improving relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan—or at least keeping their lines of communication open during their frequent bilateral disputes. Like the Obama administration, and other NATO governments, Turkish officials argue that any enduring solution to the conflict will require better relations between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In particular, Pakistani support is needed for inducing the Afghan Taliban to end its insurgency since the insurgents use Pakistani territory as a base of operations. Turkish officials and experts argue that their country has distinct advantages in this mediation role, including historically good relations with



both countries, a shared Islamic faith, a lack of local proxies or other means, and no incentives to interfere in their internal affairs.<sup>209</sup> Turkey has long-established ties with Pakistan dating from their common alignment with the Western camp during the Cold War and their shared moderate Muslim governments. Their military-to-military exchanges, which include a diverse range of bilateral and multilateral exercises, have continued to this day. In turn, Pakistan may have helped Turkey improve its relations with China and discouraged its Afghan Taliban allies from attacking Turkish troops in ISAF.<sup>210</sup>

Since April 2007, Turkey has hosted six Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Forum meetings involving senior Turkish, Afghan, and Pakistani government officials. These sessions began as presidential summits but have since expanded to include senior foreign, intelligence, interior, and other civilian and military officials. Similarly, while their initial focus was on promoting regional security and counterterrorism collaboration among the three governments, they have since broadened to include economic and other forms of nonmilitary cooperation.<sup>211</sup> For example, at the January 25, 2010, trilateral summit, the three governments endorsed initiatives to promote the reconciliation and reintegration of Taliban members who agreed to cease fighting and engage in solely nonviolent activities.<sup>212</sup> They also discussed cooperating on health, education, and other socioeconomic projects.<sup>213</sup>

Turkey has sought to move beyond mere declarations and have the parties establish concrete confidence-building measures among the parties. As part of this trilateral process, in early-2011 Turkey organized the first joint military exercise (on urban warfare) involving all three armies.<sup>214</sup> A trilateral di-

rect video-telephone conference line among the three presidents has been established. There is also a Trilateral Minds Platform whose members include academics and members of the media and think tanks. In addition, Turkey has started an Istanbul Forum that brings together representatives of the chambers of commerce in each of the three countries, which helps promote cooperation among their national business leaders and other private sector actors to complement the government-to-government meetings.<sup>215</sup>

In November 2011, Istanbul hosted two vital multinational meetings designed to support international peace efforts regarding Afghanistan. The first gathering was a tripartite presidential summit with Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, Asif Zardari of Pakistan, and Gül of Turkey. The second, the Security and Cooperation in the Heart of Asia conference, involved officials from these three countries, as well as from many other neighboring and supporting countries seeking to establish a benign regional security environment for ending the war. Representatives from Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and the United Arab Emirates attended the event as full participants and wrote the collective conference communique. These self-designated “Heart of Asia” countries were joined by senior officials from other supporting countries and international institutions. The latter included Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as the UN, Economic Cooperation Organization, OSCE, NATO, SCO, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Organization for Islamic Cooperation, the EU, and the Conference

on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia.

In its mediation efforts, Turkey has encountered many of the same challenges that have bedeviled similar U.S. and other third-party facilitators. These obstacles include the region's porous borders, which facilitate the flow of fighters and drugs; poor governance; transnational organized criminal groups that have an interest in sustaining the conflict; weak national governments and security forces that have faced major Islamist insurgents; and limited and declining commitments by external powers to support regionally driven peace programs. In addition, the Afghan-Pakistan conflict has elements of a civil war in which the Taliban enjoys some support among the large Pashtun community that straddles the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. For this reason, regionally based peace efforts invariably will prove of limited effectiveness unless accompanied by complementary developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan such as more effective governance, better counterinsurgency operations, and a greater desire on the part of the insurgents to lay down their arms and reenter their civilian societies.

The Istanbul conference communique, like other international gatherings, stressed that any peace efforts must be led by the Afghan conflict parties. Regional rivalries have also impeded Turkey's peace efforts. While Russia, China, and the West now generally support the same goals, Turkey has found it just as difficult as other countries to manage the India-Pakistan rivalry. The Indians complained when they were not invited to the trilateral summits between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey, as well as other Turkey-hosted gatherings on Afghanistan. Indians interpreted their exclusion, as well as Turkish diplomats' seeming pre-

occupation with improving bilateral economic ties between Turkey and India, as a sign that Turkey does not respect India's legitimate national security interest in Afghanistan.<sup>216</sup> Meanwhile, the main Turkish opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), has attacked the Turkish government for seeking to cooperate with the Taliban, which they denounce as a terrorist group, by considering establishing a Taliban representation bureau on Turkish territory.<sup>217</sup>

Whatever limitations on its role as a potential mediator in Afghanistan, Turkey has been a natural partner with NATO, the EU, and the United States in Afghanistan. The EU's special representative to Afghanistan, Vygaudas Usackas, has praised Turkey's support for regional peace efforts and termed EU-Turkish cooperation "most exemplary."<sup>218</sup> This bond has helped sustain close ties between Turkey and the West even when its government pursues policies toward Iran or Israel unwelcome in many Western capitals. Even if Turkey's diplomatic efforts regarding Afghanistan fail, Ankara could well receive credit for trying.

In addition to sharing the general Western goals in Afghanistan and contributing troops to the NATO-led ISAF, Turkey has unique cultural and geographic assets regarding Afghanistan that are welcome in the West as well as the region. Turkey is the only NATO country with a Muslim-majority population, a valuable attribute for a Western-led military operation in a Muslim-majority country (Afghanistan) and region (Central Asia). Turkey's location is also pivotal since Afghanistan, unlike the former Yugoslavia, is very much "out-of-area" for an Alliance whose military operations have focused primarily on Europe, North America, and the ocean between them. Incirlik Air Base and other facilities in Turkey have served as important transit centers for helping transport NATO

troops and other items to Afghanistan.<sup>219</sup> Turkey, which has the second highest number of troops of any NATO member after the United States, accrues certain advantages within the Alliance from its prominent role in Afghanistan. The other allies acknowledge Turkey's unique assets and contributions. From 2003 to 2006, former Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin served as NATO's Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan.

At the same time, several factors have constrained Turkey's engagement in Afghanistan. These include a concern about becoming bogged down in an unwinnable war, alienation from U.S. policies in Afghanistan and Iraq, and fears of antagonizing fellow Muslims by appearing to join a Western (Christian) crusade. These concerns, manifested in low popular support within Turkey for Turkey's limited involvement in the war, have made the Turkish government cautious about its level of involvement, especially in the military realm. Public opposition to the AKP's foreign policy might grow now that the AKP's "zero problems with neighbor" policy is in tatters with Turkey's relations with Syria, Iran, Armenia, Israel, and other countries deteriorating in recent years.

## CHINA

The relationship with China is, on the whole, quite positive. The Chinese see Turkey as a potentially valuable partner, now that its economy has shown itself to be both dynamic and resilient, and now that it is demonstrating a policy independence that it has not shown since ties between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Turkey were established in 1971. Beijing has been cultivating Turkey on many levels,

and Sino-Turkish economic and more recently security relations have become increasingly important. Chinese scholars have expressed admiration for Turkey's strong economic performance while PRC policymakers are content that Ankara is not going to champion Uighur or other Turkic separatism in China or other countries.

The rise of Kurdish nationalism in the 1990s has done much to change Ankara's perspective regarding Beijing's policies toward the Uighur Turks in Xinjiang (East Turkestan) province: like Beijing, Ankara now champions the principles of territorial integrity and national sovereignty, and opposes separatism. Beijing, in return, has adopted a neutral line regarding the Cyprus issue. Trade between the two has grown by leaps and bounds, though the deficit remains in the PRC's favor. Turkish officials have sought to entice Chinese investment in various infrastructure projects as a means of reducing the trade imbalance. Turkey is even considering a Chinese air defense system despite Washington's objections. The AKP government's desire for new partnerships and Turkey's eagerness to join other states in benefitting from the strength of the Chinese economy has contributed to this flourishing relationship with Beijing. Their growing mutual attraction has led them to overlook their diverging policies regarding some regional issues, such as Syria and the status of ethnic Turks in China, and instead concentrate on cultivating mutual economic and strategic ties. Both Chinese and Turkish analysts describe their countries as two rising great powers that, located on opposite ends of Eurasia, could through their strategic partnership have a major impact on the nations between. The two countries referred to increasingly deepening relations between the two nations as "stra-

tegic cooperation" in 2010 and celebrated the 40th anniversary of establishing diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Several factors are driving Turkey to improve ties with China. First, Turks want to develop economic ties, especially to sell goods to China and attract PRC investment. Second, Ankara is exploring developing further military ties with the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Third, China is a leading world power. For example, its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council gives Beijing considerable say over issues of concern to Ankara, including Cyprus, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and the Middle East peace process. Fourth, China's economic and political influence is growing in Central Asia, an important region for Turkey. Fifth, unlike Europeans and Americans, PRC officials do not attack Ankara's policies toward the Kurds, talk about an Armenian genocide, criticize Turkey's repression of media freedoms, or otherwise seek to interfere in Turkey's internal affairs. Finally, strengthening ties with China helps Ankara gain leverage in its relations with other important countries, such as Russia, Europe, and the United States.

Chinese analysts consider Turkey an increasingly important country for China due to its growing economy, increasingly independent and influential diplomacy, and pivotal geopolitical location between Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East. With respect to the latter, Chinese analysts note that Turkey is a Turkic-speaking nation closely linked with Central Asia, a Middle Eastern country whose regional influence has been rising, and a member of both NATO (formally) and the EU (in terms of some economic conditions that interest the Chinese). Beijing has strived to improve relations with the Turkish peoples, including in Xinji-

ang, considers the Middle East and especially Central Asia as two regions important for China's development and security, and is aiming to improve ties with both NATO and the EU. Turkey can serve as a conduit for China to exert both direct and indirect influence in these other regions.

In addition, Chinese analysts view Turkey as one variant of the rising number of overly Islamic oriented governments arising in Eurasia and the Middle East. They also perceive Turkey as the best of these variants, contrasting Turkey's moderate, stable and secular political system with the less stable regimes in their client state of Pakistan and the aggressively extremist form of Islamic government seen in Iran. They prefer that the Arab Spring yield more governments like Turkey rather than more regimes like Pakistan and Iran. China's Turkey specialists express grudging admiration for the ruling AKP despite suspicions of its overtly religious ties. They note that Turkey's AKP-led government has pursued a more independent foreign policy than its predecessors that has seen Turkey distance itself from the United States and especially Israel. More recently, the AKP has deftly developed good ties with the governments of Libya and Syria and then abandoned them when these regimes have fallen into trouble.

Through much of the 20th century, relations between Turkey and China were either peripheral, conflict-prone, or both. During the first half of the century, the two nations were preoccupied with their internal affairs, trying to modernize their antiquated political and economic institutions. In 1950, Turkey and the newly created PRC came into direct contact in highly unpropitious circumstances. Seeking to gain entry into NATO, which occurred in 1952, Turkey vol-



untarily sent thousands of troops to fight alongside American and other Western soldiers in the Korean War. A few months later, the PRC also sent soldiers into the Korean battlefield, leading to bloody battles between Chinese and Turkish troops. Ankara continued to recognize the Chinese government in Taipei, while PRC propagandists labeled Turkey a “running-dog of the U.S. imperialism” and supported Turkey’s leftist movements.

Trade and cultural ties developed during the 1960s and after a pause due to China’s chaotic Cultural Revolution, Ankara and Beijing established formal diplomatic relations in 1971, continuing only trade and other economic connections with Taiwan. The concurrent improvement in ties between Beijing and Washington facilitated this reconciliation, as did a mutual Chinese and Turkish concern about the growth of the military power of the Soviet Union, their common neighbor. They signed several bilateral accords, including a China-Turkey Trade Agreement, a Mutual Protection of Investments Agreement, an Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Tax Evasion, and a Fraud and Marine Shipment Agreement. Nonetheless, even after Turkey and the PRC established diplomatic relations in 1971, their political engagement with one another remained marginal. It was not until 1982 that Turkish head of state President Kenan Evren visited China. PRC President Li Xiannian conducted a reciprocal visit to Turkey 2 years later. Economic and political ties grew slowly during the next 2 decades but were not major priorities for either government. Their status as developing countries with little mutual cooperation meant that, in 1985, two-way trade amounted to only some \$100 million.

A major source of tension in PRC-Turkish relations is Beijing's treatment of its ethnic Uighur minority in Xinjiang. The Uighurs are a Turkic-speaking Muslim minority who have lived for centuries in western China in what they historically have called "East Turkestan." They share ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, historical, and other ties with the other Turkic people of Central Asia, as well as Turkey itself. In the view of Chinese analysts, the close cultural and historical affinity between the PRC's Uighurs and other Turks should enable them to serve as a bridge between China and Turkey, as well as Central Asia.

Although the PRC's trade with the Turkic nations remains low in relative terms, and dwarfed by China's enormous commerce with other regions like East Asia, Western Europe, and North America, trade with Turkey and Central Asia is important for Xinjiang. Its peripheral location has limited Xinjiang's trade ties with China's larger markets. Chinese plans to import more Caspian Basin oil and natural gas will fortify Xinjiang's westward orientation. In fact, Central Asian countries are important to China due to their proximity and the growing Chinese investment in Central Asia, whose governments are more inviting to Chinese businesses than those of the Middle East, where Chinese companies most often engage in projects under contract. In fact, the Chinese worry that the new Arab regimes will not respect China's commercial interests due to their collusion with Western governments to constrain Chinese business opportunities in these countries. Another concern is that the Middle Eastern disorders, which Chinese experts believe will last for months, if not years, will help keep world oil and other commodity prices unnaturally elevated.

China expresses suspicions about the AKP's sympathies for their fellow Muslims in Xinjiang and fears that religious and other ties could serve as a transmission belt for importing Middle Eastern chaos into the Muslim-majority nations of Central Asia and potentially Xinjiang, with its large Muslim Uighur minority. Beijing has established tight control over Xinjiang to ensure possession of its valuable natural resources and pivotal geographic position as the PRC's gateway to Central Asia and beyond. Beijing fears that relaxing control over the region would encourage separatist sentiments in Tibet and other regions of China.

PRC policies such as restricting the use of the Uighur language in schools, curbing their religious freedoms, and encouraging Han Chinese migration into Xinjiang have exacerbated ethnic tensions and led many Uighurs to flee to Turkey. Many Turks have sympathized with the Uighurs as victims of Chinese communist persecution. When the Turkish nations of Central Asia gained independence in the early-1990s, many Turks hoped those in Xinjiang would soon follow suit. For decades, successive Turkish governments offered asylum to these waves of Uighur migrants, some of whom established associations advocating independence for what they called the state of East Turkistan. These included the Eastern Turkistan Cultural Association, the Eastern Turkistan Women Association, the Eastern Turkistan Youth Union, the Eastern Turkistan Refugee Committee, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, and the Eastern Turkistan National Center. Some Uighurs—the numbers are constantly in dispute—have joined militant groups and fought back against Beijing and ethnic Hans.

The rise of Kurdish militarism later in the 1990s helped win over the Turkish political establishment to the Chinese position that Beijing's difficulties in Xinjiang resembled Ankara's problems with Kurdish separatists. By the end of the decade, Turkish officials ended their practice of giving Uighurs leaving the PRC automatic Turkish citizenship, stopped using the name "East Turkistan" rather than Xinjiang, and recognized that province as an inalienable part of China. This forced many independence-advocating East Turkistan groups to close or leave Turkey, often to Germany or the United States.

In December 1998, Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz banned Turkish officials from participating in anti-Beijing activities relating to East Turkistan.<sup>220</sup> They eventually joined the PRC in prioritizing the values of territorial integrity, national sovereignty, and the fight against what PRC officials denounce as the three evil forces. Beijing rewarded Turkey's new Uighur policies, as well as its restrained response to the June 1989 Tiananmen Square killings, by not criticizing the Turkish government's use of military force in Kurdish areas.

The PRC also adopted a neutral stance toward the Cyprus issue. The suppression of the 2009 ethnic rioting between Han Chinese and Uighurs – which began in Urumqi, the regional capital, and then spread to other regions – by the PLA in 2009 only temporarily disrupted this process of distancing Turkish government policy from Uighur nationalism. At the time, Erdoğan called the results "almost genocide," while other Turkish leaders used similar language.<sup>221</sup> Whatever their personal sentiments, Turkish officials felt compelled to express concern over the July 2013 riots in Xinjiang due to the strong, if short-lived, pressure for action by important segments of Turkish society.

Media commentators, political agitators, and others condemned the killings.<sup>222</sup> The riots embarrassingly also came just days after Gül had visited China and had prioritized developing bilateral economic ties over human rights or other issues. During a stop in Urumqi, Gül commented that the region's Uighur population represented a bridge between Turkey and China.<sup>223</sup> PRC analysts accept that Erdoğan's harsh comments following the riots were made for domestic political reasons—to resonate with the popular sentiment in Turkey against Beijing's crackdown. They note that Erdoğan quietly sent his special envoy, State Minister Zafer Çağlayan, the following month to Beijing, where he expressed understanding for the PRC policies and hope that the incident would not undermine bilateral ties. They further noted that Erdoğan refrained from denouncing China's Uighur policies when PRC Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited Turkey in October 2010. The Chinese and Turkish governments agreed to establish a strategic partnership, again manifesting Erdoğan's policy of forgetting about the Uighurs in order to develop bilateral state-to-state ties with the PRC.

Since the riots, Turkish and PRC officials have again prioritized the values of territorial integrity, national sovereignty, and fighting the three evil forces. The end of their common Soviet threat and the independent national economic reform processes in the two countries, which aimed to integrate them more into international markets, also led both governments to focus more on developing bilateral economic connections even as new political issues emerged that led to more joint discussions: the newly independent Central Asian countries, the Middle East peace process, Afghanistan, the Iraq War, and the war on terror. However, the deaths of some two dozen people in re-

newed Xinjiang clashes in late-February 2012 made it harder to ignore the Uighur issue during Xi's visit. In his *Sabah* newspaper interview, President Xi stressed how the PRC had sought to promote Xinjiang's development to raise the living standards of all the ethnic groups living there, including the Uighur. He encouraged Turkish entrepreneurs to invest in the region and attend the second China-Eurasia Expo in Urumqi in September. Despite his remarks, Uighur activists protested outside Xi's hotel in Ankara against Beijing's repression of its Uighur minority. Carrying a flag of East Turkestan, the demonstrators burned a poster of Xi and PRC flags before police dispersed them. According to China's *Xinhua* News Agency, when meeting with Erdoğan at his Istanbul home on February 22, Xi said that:

China hopes that Turkey will continue to take effective measures to oppose and prevent anti-China separatist activities by 'East Turkistan' forces on its territory so as to ensure the healthy and steady growth of China-Turkey ties.<sup>224</sup>

*Xinhua* also reports that:

Erdoğan reaffirmed that Turkey has consistently adhered to the one-China policy, recognized the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate representative of the whole Chinese people, and never allowed any activity on its territory that aims to undermine China's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>225</sup>

Turkey may become more important for the rest of China since the two countries' national economies are expanding much faster than the global average, and have sustained exceptionally high gross domestic

product (GDP) growth rates despite the global recession, elevating their global economic importance. The PRC has become Turkey's third largest trading partner (after Germany and Russia) and the leading source of Turkey's imports. According to the PRC Ministry of Commerce, two-way trade has grown from approximately \$1 billion in 2001 to almost \$18.7 billion in 2011, an 18-fold increase during that decade.<sup>226</sup> Turkish government statistics indicate that bilateral trade amounted to \$24.1 billion in 2011.<sup>227</sup> During the 2001-11 period, Chinese investment in Turkey reached \$10 billion, with projects worth \$4 billion already finalized.<sup>228</sup>

PRC firms are very active in Turkey's infrastructure, construction, mining, and telecommunications sectors.<sup>229</sup> Both Ankara and Beijing have an interest in helping Turkey realize its ambition to become a multidirectional energy corridor that would help direct some Eurasian oil and gas eastward as well as toward Europe and the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>230</sup> Turkey and China, with two of the world's largest and most dynamic economies, are especially eager to revive their traditional Silk Road links through Central Asia and other Eurasian countries. The PRC leadership appreciates Turkey's potential gateway status for sales in Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East. Huawei Technologies Ltd. has chosen İstanbul as its headquarters for managing its businesses in Central Asia.<sup>231</sup> When Premier Wen Jiabao visited Turkey in 2010, the two countries signed eight deals in areas including trade, energy facilities, and railway networks that would help connect Istanbul to Beijing through a "modern silk road."<sup>232</sup> Wen's visit to Turkey was the first conducted by a PRC Prime Minister in 8 years.<sup>233</sup> He and Erdoğan announced they would establish a strategic

cooperation relationship that would include increased economic, political, energy, security, cultural, and other ties.<sup>234</sup> Wen said that China would:

take active measures to promote trade with Turkey” and would encourage investment by Chinese enterprises in Turkey and facilitate cooperation in various economic fields, such as power projects, bridge construction and the financial sector.<sup>235</sup>

The two leaders pledged to increase their bilateral trade, which then amounted to less than \$20 billion each year, to \$50 billion annually within the next 5 years. The agreements signed during Wen’s visit suggest that Turkey and China are eager to expand their economic ties. China is already Turkey’s largest trade partner in the Far East.<sup>236</sup>

There are some economic difficulties in the Turkey-China relationship. The two countries sometimes compete for sales as well as access to regional energy supplies. Another source of economic tension is their bilateral trade imbalance. Approximately 60 percent of China’s imports from Turkey consist of mined raw materials, with chemicals also ranking high on the list.<sup>237</sup> Meanwhile, more than three-fourths of Turkey’s imports from China are intermediate goods.<sup>238</sup> The Turkish authorities want PRC companies to process more of these mining products inside Turkey.<sup>239</sup>

Trade between Turkey and China has flourished in recent years, but almost all of this has been due to Turks’ growing appetite for Chinese goods. Turkey’s trade with China is currently dominated by imports from China, which totaled \$21 billion in 2011, with only \$3 billion in exports. Like other countries, Turks have found penetrating the Chinese market difficult. The lower costs of Chinese labor and other PRC ad-



vantages have resulted in Sino-Turkish trade being very imbalanced.<sup>240</sup> The PRC Ambassador to Turkey, Gong Xiaosheng, insists that China does not want such an enormous trade surplus. He claimed the PRC government was encouraging Chinese enterprises to import more from Turkey as well as increase their direct investment in Turkey.<sup>241</sup> In addition to setting the goal of increasing their two-way trade, the two governments said they would rely more on national currencies in their bilateral commerce, which could help equalize both countries mutual imports and exports.

In any case, Turkish policymakers seem less interested in rectifying the bilateral trade imbalance than in enticing more PRC investment in Turkish infrastructure. Turkish officials are eager to take advantage of Chinese capital and technology to help develop their energy and transportation sectors. High-speed railroads are a special area of interest given China's leading expertise in this area and Turkish desires to build a network of fast east-west trains to enhance Turkey's role as a conduit for commerce between Europe and Asia.

The focus on deepening and rectifying mutual economic ties was evident in then-Vice President Xi Jinping's 3-day February 2012 visit, made at the invitation of Gül.<sup>242</sup> In Ankara, Xi met with Gül and Turkish Parliament Speaker Cicek. He then flew to Istanbul to talk with Erdoğan and attended a China-Turkey business forum. When Xi met Gül, the two governments signed seven bilateral economic agreements.<sup>243</sup> These included a financial cooperation agreement between the Treasury Undersecretariat and the China Development Bank, a memorandum of understanding between Turkish public broadcaster-TRT and Chinese Central Television (CCTV), and a currency swap agreement

between the two national banks. Furthermore, Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan encouraged Turkish banks to open branches in China and PRC financial institutions to enter Turkey.<sup>244</sup> Xi and Erdoğan said that the two sides should enhance their economic cooperation in finance, energy, infrastructure construction, and high-technology sectors such as aviation, aerospace, nuclear energy, and high-speed rail transportation.<sup>245</sup>

In his February 22 address to the China-Turkey Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum in Istanbul, attended by hundreds of Chinese and Turkish business leaders, Xi praised the attendees as “participants and promoters of the win-win and mutually-beneficial economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.”<sup>246</sup> Xi urged the two countries to grasp the opportunities for their emerging market economies to “upgrade and push forward the win-win and mutually-beneficial economic and trade cooperation.” He specifically called for increasing cooperation on global and international hotspot issues; broadening cooperation into more sectors such as transportation and infrastructure development; jointly resisting trade protectionism including by mitigating trade imbalances; and increasing cultural exchange and people-to-people ties.<sup>247</sup>

To this end, Turkey designated 2012 as a Chinese Cultural Year and China hosted a Turkish Cultural Year in 2013. The number of Chinese tourists visiting Turkey has grown significantly in recent years, soaring from only a few thousand in 2008 to more than 100,000 in 2011. Even so, this figure is considerably less than the millions of Russians and Europeans who vacation every year in Turkey.<sup>248</sup>

For his part, Turkish Economy Minister Zafer Çağlayan told the Forum attendees that, besides China’s purchasing more Turkish products, additional

Chinese investments in Turkey were needed to help remedy the trade imbalance.<sup>249</sup> Murat Sungurlu, the head of the Turkish-Chinese Industrialists and Businessmen Association (TÜÇSİAD), told *Today's Zaman* that only 43 of the 29,144 foreign-owned companies in Turkey were from China.<sup>250</sup> Çağlayan called for the holding of more of these mutual business forums and trade fairs so that Chinese companies would better understand business opportunities in Turkey.<sup>251</sup> Babacan said Turkish and Chinese firms could establish partnerships and undertake joint projects in third countries.<sup>252</sup> Xi denied China "deliberately" sought a trade surplus with any other state. "With respect to the trade deficit in the trade between Turkey and China," he explained, "China is willing to maintain communication and cooperation with Turkey and take comprehensive mitigation measures."<sup>253</sup> Xi said the PRC would continue to give incentives for Chinese firms to invest in Turkey, though he encouraged Turkish officials to ensure an attractive investment climate for PRC investors.<sup>254</sup>

Sino-Turkish military cooperation began in the 1990s after Ankara turned to China following failed negotiations with the U.S. Government to produce, with technology transfer, the M-270 Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS). In the late-1990s, Turkey manufactured under license the Chinese WS-1 302mm and TR-3000 rockets, as well as the B-611 short-range surface-to-surface missile.<sup>255</sup> In the late-1990s, the United States rejected Turkey's request to purchase the MLRS on the grounds that Turkey had used U.S.-provided arms to attack Kurdish anti-government militias. Therefore, Turkey turned to China to acquire rockets, missiles, and relevant technologies. Still, the value of the Chinese arms transfers to Ankara has remained

small compared to what Turkey was acquiring from its NATO partners, and Turkish military exchanges with China were very infrequent compared with the robust exchange program between Turkey and the United States, Europe, and Israel. In recent years, military cooperation between China and Turkey has taken an upward trend.

In October 2010, China's fighters arrived in Turkey (via air passageways provided by Pakistan and Iran) at the invitation of Turkey to join in its air force drill code-named *Anatolian Eagle*, in China's first ever bilateral military exercise with Turkey, which also marked the PRC's first military exercise based on the territory of a NATO member. In past years, the annual *Anatolian Eagle* air drills in the central Anatolian province of Konya involved warplanes from the United States, other NATO countries, and Israel. But in 2009 and 2010, the Turkish government decided not to invite Israel to participate, which may have contributed to the U.S. decision to skip the drills as well.

Seeing an opportunity for mutual benefit, the Turkish and Chinese air forces decided to conduct their own maneuvers. Presumably at the government's direction, the Turkish media gave much less coverage to the drills as compared with previous years. Still, the Pentagon spokeswoman felt compelled to stress that Turkey remained committed to NATO and that Turkish representatives had pledged to protect U.S. and NATO military secrets.<sup>256</sup> The decision of the Turkish air force to use its older F-4Es rather than its more advanced F-16s during the exercises with the Chinese may have resulted from Pentagon pressure since the initial media reports had indicated the F-16s would participate.<sup>257</sup> Notwithstanding this apparent concession to U.S. concerns that the exercises would

enhance Chinese understanding of NATO tactics and technologies, which presumably make it easier for the PLA to develop countermeasures, several American commentators cited the exercises as a reason to be cautious about transferring further advanced military technology to Turkey, including the new F-35 joint strike fighter.<sup>258</sup> Despite these concerns, Turkish-PRC military cooperation looks set to continue. The TSK are eagerly trying to develop contacts with non-Western militaries, while the PLA Air Force has been expanding its range of operations during the past year, including by simulating long-distance bombing runs in Kazakhstan earlier in September 2013 during the SCO's annual exercise.

The more interesting matter is Beijing's ambitions to expand its hitherto intermittent presence in the Turkish defense market. While the Turkish military has strong ties to the U.S. military industry and continues to seek advanced military equipment from the United States and participate in joint defense industry projects, Erdoğan recently announced the decision to enter into negotiations with China to purchase the Chinese FD-2000 air defense system. Ankara's opting for the PRC's system, based on the HQ-9 missile, represents a tremendous achievement for China's arms sales industry and a major break with tradition for the Turkish national security community, which still prefers to purchase major weapons systems from the West if Turkey's own developing defense industry cannot produce them. Although its reported range and effectiveness is less than that of the competing systems, and the FD-2000 is not battle tested like the Patriots, China's bid was reportedly \$1 billion less than the competitors. Most importantly, China has offered to co-produce the entire systems in Turkey,

transferring much defense technology in the process and meeting Turkey's long-standing preference to improve the capacity of its national defense industry. But the state-owned Chinese company, China Precision Machinery Export-Import Corporation, is under sanctions for violating the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act of 2006, enacted by the United States, to prevent proliferation of WMD and ballistic missile technology to the named countries. It is not clear if Turkish policymakers knew or understood this problem, and recent media reports suggest Turkish defense firms are lobbying Ankara to reverse course and buy another system.<sup>259</sup>

The China-Turkey relationship looks set to become even more important in coming years due to the two countries' status as rising global powers and their current governments' inclination to embrace new partnerships and opportunities. They are also rising world powers eager to remake at least some features of the international system, whose foundations were laid after World War II, when Ankara and Beijing were too weak to have much influence. Turks are eager to draw on Chinese capital and technologies as they develop their own economy, while the PRC is looking to deepen ties with important regional actors such as Turkey. Nonetheless, their bilateral relationship is unlikely to become as important as, for example, the broad and deep ties each has developed in recent years with Russia.

Turkey and China could easily become commercial rivals in third markets, especially in the textile and construction sectors, since they both rely on their low labor costs as a main source of their comparative advantage in world trade. U.S. pressure will probably also constrain Turkey's potential interest in develop-

ing close defense ties with the PRC. Turkey and China might also compete again for influence and resources in Central Asia even if they continue to overlook China's Uighur minority.

## **TURKEY'S DEFENSE INDUSTRY**

Turkey has built one of the most impressive defense industrial bases among the newly industrialized states in the Middle East. The country's total military expenditure for 2014 was almost \$11 billion.<sup>260</sup> The TSK are the 14th largest in the world and the largest in Europe (if Russia is excluded), with more than 500,000 active duty personnel across all the services, 2,500 main battle tanks, 350 fighter and fighter/ground attack jets, 40 attack helicopters, and about 24 submarines and major surface warships.<sup>261</sup> According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Turkey accounted for 3 percent of worldwide imports of conventional weapons for the 2009-13 period.<sup>262</sup> Yet, over time, Ankara has reduced the percentage of these weapons that it has purchased from U.S. sources, while raising the share of arms imported from non-U.S. companies and the proportion of weapons manufactured in Turkey. Meanwhile, Turkish defense companies have been expanding their own exports.

The United States traditionally has been the largest supplier of defense systems to Turkey due to the two countries' strategic ties, joint military exercises, common NATO membership, the TSK's long familiarity with U.S. weaponry, and interoperability considerations. Initially, Turkey lacked a major defense industrial sector, and buying weapons from the United States was seen as a natural means of reinforcing the bilateral alliance. Since the mid-1990s, Turkey has

strived to modernize its armed forces and develop its defense industry. In the 1990s, Turkey launched a campaign to modernize its military that will cost an estimated \$150 billion by 2026. The motives for this indigenous defense industrialization were not only military, but also economic and political. Turkey consciously pursued a parallel strategy of security and development, building its heavy industry and high-technology sectors while striving for greater self-sufficiency in arms production. Turkey has also pursued an advanced arms production capability to enhance its international status and influence.

Furthermore, U.S. policies have shaped Ankara's behavior. Turkey's 1974 military intervention in Cyprus led the U.S. Congress to curtail defense assistance to Turkey and impose an embargo on weapons sales, which led Ankara to seek alternative arms suppliers.<sup>263</sup> Congress lifted the arms embargo in 1978. In 1980, Turkey and the United States signed a Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA) that provided for additional weapons transfers and for U.S. bases in Turkey. The DECA has been renewed several times.<sup>264</sup>

Nonetheless, Turkey has continued to seek non-U.S. arms suppliers. Turkey bought some weapons from Russia in the 1990s. While Russia was more relaxed about how Turkey could use these weapons, the TSK complained about the inferior quality of some Russian weapons, the lack of Russian after-sale services, and Russia's inability to provide sufficient spare parts. Russia further irked Ankara when it announced its intention to sell S-300 air defense missile systems to the Greek-governed portion of Cyprus.<sup>265</sup> Israel also became a major arms supplier to Turkey, beginning with a 1996 defense and military pact between the two countries.<sup>266</sup>



In the ensuing years, Israeli firms upgraded ageing Turkish weapons systems and sold its newer defense systems to Turkey. Israeli Military Industries Ltd., for example, upgraded 170 of Turkey's tanks, while Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) sold Ankara unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and upgraded several dozen Turkish F-4 fighter jets.<sup>267</sup> But defense cooperation between the two countries ceased following the Israeli raid on a Turkish-organized flotilla that was trying to break the Israeli blockade on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Signs of a thaw emerged only in 2013, when the IAI delivered \$100 million worth of electronic systems for the airborne early warning and control aircraft that Boeing is manufacturing for Turkey's air force.<sup>268</sup> However, the IAI had committed to the deal in 2002.<sup>269</sup>

The frayed Israel-Turkey relationship has affected Turkey's nascent defense industry in other ways. In 2005, Turkey contracted with IAI to purchase 10 Heron UAVs, which were to be delivered in 2007. The delivery date was continually postponed, with the Israeli producers blaming the delays on the need to adopt the Heron to accommodate Turkish electronic systems. After Israel began delivery of the UAVs in 2009, Turkey complained about their sub-par performance. Turkey tried to acquire U.S.-made Predator UAVs, but the U.S. Government resisted, given the rift between Tel Aviv and Ankara as well as Turkey's then-relatively warm ties with Syria and Iran.<sup>270</sup>

Turkey has cooperated with new defense industrial partners in recent years. For example, Turkey has become the second largest buyer of defense equipment from South Korea, after the United States. In 2001, Seoul and Ankara inked a deal worth \$1 billion for modified versions of South Korea's K9 Thunder

self-propelled howitzer, produced by Samsung Techwin. In 2007, Turkey agreed to purchase 40 single-engine turboprop training KT-1 aircraft, with much technology transfer. Turkish Aerospace Industries will produce 35 of the aircraft under a license.<sup>271</sup> From Turkey's perspective, this deal is ideal in that it provides Turkey with "good enough" defense systems at a lower price than the most advanced systems, while augmenting the capacity of its own defense industry.

While considering a wider range of foreign suppliers, the Turkish government has sought to raise the share of items and services purchased from the country's own defense industries. Nearly 2 decades ago, the Turkish Parliament adopted Law No. 3238, which mandated the development of a "modern defence industry . . . to achieve the modernization of the Turkish Armed Forces." Turkey's defense industry has grown since then. In 2008, Turkey had more than 200 defense companies and 1,000 subcontractors dealing in \$3 to \$4 billion worth of business. That year, Turkey was the world's 28th largest arms exporter.<sup>272</sup> Between 2004 and 2010, the ratio of domestically sourced armaments rose from 15 percent to 54 percent, though the percentages for the more critical and advanced defense technologies is likely higher.<sup>273</sup>

As Turkey has developed its defense industry, more U.S. companies have lost sales to firms from countries with less restrictive export rules and more generous technology transfer policies.<sup>274</sup> Turkey sees producing its own tanks, helicopters, UAVs, and fighter jets as high-priority national projects. Even so, Turkey will likely need foreign technical expertise and financial resources, at least for some critical sub-systems.<sup>275</sup> U.S. defense sales to Turkey reached an all-time high in the 1990s. Although the U.S. share has since declined,

for the 2009-13 period, Turkey was the world's 11th largest importer of arms.<sup>276</sup> In 2012, Turkey was the world's fourth largest importer of arms, behind India, China, and the United States, respectively.<sup>277</sup>

Turkish officials want to increase their country's weapons exports. The government sees foreign arms sales as another means to give other countries a stake in Turkey's security, as well as an opportunity to create more high-tech jobs and lower unit costs for the TSK through larger production runs. The same factors that have enabled Turkey's industry to substitute for previously imported defense items have made them better able to compete for foreign sales: the growing sophistication and size of Turkey's civilian economy, the companies' improving human capital and productivity, mandatory technology transfers and offsets, and extensive Turkish government support for the industry in the form of domestic military contracts and state-supported research and development efforts.

In 2012, Turkey exported defense products to 60 countries.<sup>278</sup> That year, Turkish arms exports reached \$1.3 billion, a 43 percent increase over the previous year, making Turkey the world's 24th largest arms exporter.<sup>279</sup> The United States was Turkey's chief defense export market, buying \$490 million of Turkish military products in 2012. These purchases were primarily related to the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program, for which Turkish firms produce components. Following the United States, Turkey sold \$101 million worth of weapons to the United Arab Emirates and \$99 million to Saudi Arabia.<sup>280</sup>

Ankara aspires to raise its arms exports to \$2 billion by 2016 (while spending \$8 billion on acquiring defense systems from other countries).<sup>281</sup> Turkey hopes, for example, to sell its Altay main battle tank, referred

to as the “national tank,” to Saudi Arabia, which has plenty of cash to invest in its defense capabilities and has an inventory of ageing tanks. A sale would boost political and military ties between the two Sunni countries and help to cement security ties useful for managing any Iranian-led Shia bloc in the region.<sup>282</sup>

It is important not to exaggerate the extent of these changes. Despite its maturing defense industry, Murad Bayar, Turkey’s Undersecretary for Defense Industries, has stated that Turkey lacks a cohesive defense armaments export policy.<sup>283</sup> The U.S. grip on the international arms market is declining, while Turkish defense firms are experiencing growth, but the United States still remains the largest international arms dealer, with a 30 percent share of total arms exports in 2012, worth more than \$200 billion.<sup>284</sup> Furthermore, the United States is the world’s largest supplier of combat aircraft (62 percent of total exports), which happens to be one of Turkey’s major military imports.<sup>285</sup> As of 2010, the United States was involved in roughly 80 percent of the defense-related activities in Turkey.

Although unable to match the quality of some U.S. defense exports, Turkish companies can often win contracts based on their lower costs and greater ability to transfer military technology to potential buyers. Obviously, there are buyers, like the Arab monarchies, who can afford to pay the highest prices for the best quality weapons, and also hope their purchases generate influence in Washington. But many other countries will find Turkish weapons systems of sufficient quality for their needs, and also gain from Turkey’s less restrictive technology transfer policies. However, in these respects, Turkish firms are joined by Russian and increasingly Chinese defense companies, which can capture defense markets where the buyer is seek-

ing good enough weapons at substantially lower costs than their U.S. competitors and with more generous technology transfer provisions.

The solution for this greater foreign competition in third-party defense markets is to make U.S. defense exports more competitive in general rather than just against Turkey. In addition to ensuring a level playing field by denying foreign competitors access to unfair subsidies, proprietary information, or proliferation loopholes, U.S. defense corporations must lower their costs, increase their reliability, and work with the Obama administration and Congress to reform U.S. defense export laws and regulations to make it easier for U.S. firms to transfer widely available military technologies to foreign buyers while still protecting U.S. defense secrets.

## DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

The Turkish government's 2009 policy reversal toward the Kurds applied within Turkey as well as in northern Iraq. Today, there are nearly 15 million Kurds in Turkey, comprising one-fifth of the country's population.<sup>286</sup> They are Turkey's largest minority group, as well as one of the country's poorest populations due to the discrimination against them by the Turkish state.<sup>287</sup> Many Kurds reside in Turkey's southeast, which traditionally has been their home region, but there are many others who also live in Turkey's urban areas.<sup>288</sup> Besides the several million Kurds living in Turkey, there are also Kurdish populations in the neighboring states of Iraq, Syria, and Iran, making a total of around 30 million Kurds worldwide.<sup>289</sup>

Within Turkey, the conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish government has produced more

than 40,000 casualties in 30 years and cost Turkey billions of dollars.<sup>290</sup> In 1978, the Kurd leader, Abdullah Öcalan, founded the PKK, which has sought to win Kurdish independence from Turkey through armed conflict.<sup>291</sup> Turkey, the United States, and the EU have since designated the PKK a terrorist organization. Its first attack against Turkish forces occurred in 1984 in the district of Semdinli,<sup>292</sup> located in the largely Kurdish southeast, and many more attacks have occurred since then. Originally, the goal of the attacks was the establishment of Kurdistan, which would be an independent entity made up of the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran.<sup>293</sup> During the 1990s, however, the PKK gave up this separatist idea and instead called for more autonomy for the Kurds living in Turkey.<sup>294</sup>

Finally, in 1999, Öcalan was captured in Kenya and imprisoned for treason on the Turkish prison island of Imrali, located in the Sea of Marmara.<sup>295</sup> Despite this, he is still considered to be the *de facto* leader of the PKK and serves as its spokesperson. In recent years, the PKK's demands have changed; it no longer holds the aspiration to establish Kurdistan. Instead, the PKK has shifted to demanding more autonomy and democratic rights. It also seeks greater constitutional rights for Kurds, more freedom to use the Kurdish language, and the lessening of state pressure on Kurdish activists.<sup>296</sup>

Following years of pro-reform rhetoric as well as open and secret talks with Kurdish nationalists (including between the director of national intelligence and imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan), the AKP-led Turkish government made a major policy reversal in 2009 and adopted a more flexible and embracing policy toward its Kurdish minority as well as the KRG

in northern Iraq. The Kurdish opening within Turkey saw the government give Kurds more cultural rights, including the right to use the Kurdish language in public (responding to claims of linguistic genocide). For example, it launched a 24-hour state-run Kurdish language television channel (TRT6, widely available through terrestrial transmission) in January 2009. Furthermore, AKP leaders apologized for past Turkish repression of Kurdish rights and pledged to address earlier wrongs. Some Kurdish leaders hoped that, once Turks understood that Kurds simply want to achieve equal rights within a common country, more Turks would appreciate and support their concern. Kurdish nationalists proposed a peace plan whose components include a ceasefire, establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission with amnesty for ex-PKK fighters, deploying a multinational force to assist with the demobilization of PKK insurgents and their eventual entry into the peaceful political process, releasing PKK prisoners, enhancing Kurds' constitutional and legal rights, and eventually the release of Öcalan from prison.

The newly declared policy of moderation initially received substantial popular support due to widespread war weariness among Turks, Kurds, and others. Turk-Kurdish violence had persisted for decades, so many individuals on both sides were willing to try to achieve a political resolution of their differences. Moreover, the AKP worked to improve the economic situation in the poor Kurdish southeast by supporting local businesses, developing agriculture, and promoting the construction of private hospitals. These actions have led many Kurds to see the party in a favorable light and to vote for it in elections.<sup>297</sup> But Turkish nationalist parties soon began to make political gains by

accusing the AKP of making too many concessions with little effect.

The AKP responded by moving more cautiously, which led to dampening enthusiasm among Kurds for the opening and renewed PKK violence. In effect, the hardliners on both sides were empowering each other. In addition, impatient Kurdish activists, only some of whom defend or even sympathize the PKK and its violent methods, complain that they have seen few changes on the ground in southeast Turkey despite the progressive rhetoric they hear in Ankara. The slow and half-hearted pace of the AKP "Democratic Opening" also led some Turkish Kurds to question the government's sincerity. For example, the government's amnesty proved very limited and conditional, with many ex-PKK and even nonviolent Kurdish nationalists finding themselves re-arrested and imprisoned.

Restrictions on Kurdish political activities continue to constrain opportunities for a peaceful resolution of Turkey's Kurdish crisis. The requirement that any political party must receive at least 10 percent in a general parliamentary election to gain seats in the national legislature is twice as high a hurdle as that in most European countries that have proportional representation voting systems. Kurdish nationalists often must run as independent candidates, which deprives them of access to public television and radio political protests or votes from Turkey's large diaspora, whose members must vote for one of the parties on the ballot.

In September 2011, the International Crisis Group (ICG) released a report entitled, "Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency," which offered sensible advice regarding how to make progress resolving Turkey's Kurdish issue. The thrust of their recommendations was to move the struggle for Kurdish rights from the



field of battle to field of parliament. The group called for an end to the fighting, major legal reforms, an amnesty and Turkish Kurd acceptance to work within the legal Turkish system. The ICG authors endorsed the Democratic Opening toward the Kurds adopted by the ruling AKP, which has sought to deemphasize ethnic tensions by making some concessions to Kurds, as well as stressing the common Muslim identity of Turks and Kurds rather than their ethnic differences. But the ICG wants to see the Turkish government implement its reforms more consistently and effectively. They also advocate that the authorities release imprisoned nonviolent Kurdish politicians and allow even those Kurds sympathetic to the PKK, which is the leading anti-Ankara terrorist government, to take their elected seats in parliament. Meanwhile, they call on both sides to avoid tit-for-tat escalatory moves and instead resume the government-PKK ceasefire declared last year – there have been many such ceasefires, but they soon collapse due to lack of follow-up and other problems—as well as disarmament negotiations.

Inside Turkey, the declining influence of the Turkish military may have weakened U.S. influence in Turkey. Before the advent of the AKP government in 2002, the military effectively dominated Turkish politics and enforced a secular and Western-oriented country. The Turkish General Staff exercised power largely informally but also through successive coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997.

Under the AKP, the Turkish parliament has established powers of surveillance and control over major institutions, such as the National Security Council, that used to facilitate the military's control of civil society.<sup>298</sup> Publicized criminal investigations like the

Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases, looking into the military's role in suspected plots to overthrow the government in the early-2000s, have also undermined the Turkish military's power. Some Turkish citizens fear that the AKP's policies have overcorrected for the earlier military threat, and that these policies threaten to impose an excessively powerful civilian executive branch. Turkey has recently experienced some of its most serious corruption scandals and mass protests in years. Concerns regarding the AKP government have been reflected in the demonstrations that started in late-May 2013 in Taksim Square, which rapidly expanded in scope. The protesters have denounced what they saw as the country's growing authoritarianism, mistreatment of minorities, and repression of civil rights and media freedoms.

The Istanbul street protests began when a group of environmentalists staged a peaceful demonstration at Taksim's Gezi Park to challenge the government's plans to demolish the park to establish a shopping mall and other buildings.<sup>299</sup> On May 30, the opposition CHP announced that they would side with the protestors, thereby elevating the political stakes at issue. As the number of protestors grew, Erdoğan, the main proponent of the demolition plan, refused to back down or offer a compromise, such as agreeing to establish a commission to study the issue or to hold a referendum. With his approval, the Turkish police tried to disperse the protesters with tear gas and by burning several of their tents.<sup>300</sup> The police violence backfired, encouraging many others to join the protests, which spread throughout Istanbul and many other parts of Turkey.<sup>301</sup>

By June 1, Interior Minister Muammer Guler claimed that almost 1,000 people had been arrest-

ed at nearly 100 demonstrations nationwide, with over 1,000 people injured in Istanbul and Ankara.<sup>302</sup> Erdoğan said that he would investigate the issue of excessive police violence but insisted that he would stand by plans to develop Gezi Park.<sup>303</sup> Clashes between anti-government demonstrators and the Turkish police became a regular occurrence. The protest movement has adopted a broader agenda and gained a wider following, including several strata of Turkish society that have not engaged in such direct action before, such as some professionals and other members of the middle class. The demonstrators have a lengthy list of grievances against the Turkish government and the ruling AKP.<sup>304</sup> Their most prominent concerns include objections to Erdoğan's leadership style, seen as authoritarian and insensitive to the concerns of non-AKP supporters. The protesters also worry about the AKP's Islam-inspired policies, such as its weakening secularization, limiting free speech, and recent efforts to limit the sale of alcohol.

Erdoğan has blamed the Hizmet movement, Jews, and foreign countries for the most recent scandals, whose reach has extended to the security services. The corruption, protests, and crackdown have severely harmed Erdoğan's international standing, especially in the West. EU membership, always a long shot despite the AKP's initial reform drive, has faded even further away. Erdoğan's January 21, 2014, trip to Brussels, Belgium, provided EU leaders with an opportunity to criticize him in person. In a joint press conference with the Turkish prime minister, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy pointedly stated that, "It is important not to backtrack on achievements and to ensure that the judiciary is able to function without discrimination or preference."<sup>305</sup>

European Commission President José Manuel Barroso added that, in the view of the EU, “Whatever the problems are, we believe that the solution for those problems should respect the principles of rule of law and separation of powers.”<sup>306</sup>

Influential U.S. opinion leaders have also expressed concerns regarding Turkey’s secular political democracy and foreign-policy orientation. In a public address in Washington, Senator John McCain called the public demonstrations “a rebellion against Erdoğan’s push of the Turkish people toward Islam” as well as popular unease that “Erdoğan . . . is becoming more like a dictator than a prime minister or a president.”<sup>307</sup> A bipartisan network of dozens of foreign-policy opinion makers, including former senior Democratic and Republican officials in recent U.S. administrations, have circulated a letter urging Obama to adopt a more critical line with Erdoğan.

Some analysts worry that the United States is repeating its familiar approach in the greater Middle East of downplaying human rights and democracy concerns in favor of short-term security needs and other priorities, despite the risk of alienating the partner’s population and accepting policies that risk weakening the country’s liberal democratic potential over the long term. Furthermore, many commentaries expressed concern that Erdoğan’s actions were discrediting the model partnership image found in U.S. official discourse on Turkey since Obama’s first trip there a few months after he assumed office in January 2009.

Since Turkey is one of the largest electoral democracies with a Muslim majority, the United States is looking to Turkey as a democratic model for Muslims and to present an alternative to Islamic extrem-

ism. Turkey's value of a force against radical Islamist movements has been devalued by the Turkish government's lax attitude toward secularism and ties with Sunni militants in Syria and elsewhere. Citizens and governments in Central Asia who previously saw Erdoğan and the AKP as role models of a moderate Islamist movement now see Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan as having as strong economies as Turkey but also being more secular and stable, if less democratic. The Arab Spring analogy was sometimes referenced in the U.S. media, with the cozy ties between Washington and Cairo when Hosni Mubarak still held autocratic power over Egypt cited as a common example.

In recent months, a group of experts assembled by the Washington-based Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) have launched the most comprehensive and sustained campaign calling for changing U.S. policies toward Erdoğan. Under its auspices, U.S. Ambassadors to Turkey Morton Abramowitz and Eric Edelman, along with BPC project leader Blaise Misztal, have been releasing a number of op-eds and other publications calling on the Obama administration to take a much harder public stand with Erdoğan.<sup>308</sup> In their view, Erdoğan's policies risk undermining Turkey's value as a U.S. partner through actions that weaken its democratic political institutions, foreign investor confidence, and other sources of Turkey's international power. While acknowledging the risk that outside heckling can backfire given the Turkish public's antipathy toward the U.S. government, they argue that the prime minister and other Turkish elites do care about Obama's views and have moderated their policies regarding Israel and other issues to address U.S. concerns.<sup>309</sup>

However, Obama's cautious policy does have some supporters in the U.S. media and think tank community. For example, Doug Bandow of the CATO Institute, while acknowledging that Erdoğan is not an ideal democratic leader, writes that Erdoğan was legitimately elected and a better alternative than the previous military dictatorship, where hundreds were jailed, tortured, and executed. In addition, Bandow maintains that Turkey's current government, while led by an Islamist party, is not a dictatorship like the former governments of Tunisia, Egypt, or Syria; Bandow also considers the AKP-run government considerably more stable than the others.<sup>310</sup> These recent criticisms followed earlier criticism in the United States about how Turkey was drifting away from its Western orientation toward Iran, Russia, and other Eastern partners.

Until now, fears of damaging the U.S.-Turkey partnership generally has made Obama administration officials reluctant to attack Erdoğan's domestic policies. Even during the June protests and resulting police crackdown, Obama never directly criticized Erdoğan publicly.<sup>311</sup> When asked about the domestic events in Turkey, the standard White House response has been to describe them as important but insist that the United States does not interfere in Turkey's internal affairs. For example, in late-January 2014, White House Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes told the foreign media that the administration has confidence that Turkey, as a strong democracy and important NATO ally, can resolve its problems on its own and that Washington would continue to cooperate with the Erdoğan government on foreign policy.<sup>312</sup> At the State Department, Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf likewise insisted that, "The United States is not and will not become involved in Turkey's domestic politics."<sup>313</sup>

One reason for the divergence between the EU and the U.S. response is that Obama does not want to worsen further his personal ties with Erdoğan. In place of their constant dialogue a few years ago, now months go by without Erdoğan and Obama talking even by phone. Another difference is that the EU has more leverage over Turkey due to Brussels' ability to deny Ankara various economic rewards. U.S. economic aid to Turkey is much less, while U.S. military financial assistance, previously the dominant form of financial aid, has dwindled to almost nothing.

Conversely, the United States needs Turkey more than the EU due to Turkey's status as an almost unique platform for projecting U.S. hard and soft power in Iraq, Syria, and other Middle Eastern countries.<sup>314</sup> But Erdoğan escalated matters by blaming the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Francis J. Ricciardone, for plotting his removal. A story that simultaneously appeared in four pro-AKP newspapers describes Ricciardone as telling his EU ambassadorial colleagues in Ankara over dinner on December 17, 2013, when the latest arrests became public, that the scandal would precipitate the "collapse of an empire," an alleged reference to Erdoğan's government. Erdoğan's partisans described Ricciardone as participating in a Jewish-Hizmet conspiracy to bring down the AKP government and replace it with one more pliable to Washington and Tel Aviv. The conspiracy theorists point to a coincidence of alleged facts to justify their suspicions—Ricciardone had warned Turkey's Halkbank earlier that it would be punished for helping Iran evade sanctions, he met with CHP opposition leaders on December 17, and one of the people arrested that day was the son of Economy Minister Zafer Caglayan, who had announced that Turkey would renew its

controversial gold-for-gas trade with Iran now that Tehran had reached a sanctions-relief deal with the international community.<sup>315</sup>

Erdoğan has voiced disapproval of the presence of Fetullah Gulen in Pennsylvania, accusing the religious leader of organizing a campaign to infiltrate Turkey's security forces, create a state within a state, and seek Erdoğan's overthrow from his safe haven in Pennsylvania.<sup>316</sup> U.S. and EU officials have denied that Ricciardone made the alleged statement against Erdoğan. The U.S. embassy in Ankara released a statement stating:

Allegations targeting US Embassy employees published in some media organs do not reflect the truth . . . to repeat once again: No one should endanger Turkey-US relations through such intentional slander.<sup>317</sup>

Nonetheless, Erdoğan publicly implied that he would seek Ricciardone's withdrawal from Turkey over his supposed plotting against him.<sup>318</sup> Obama responded with his first public rebuke of Erdoğan, warning that such statements and actions could endanger the U.S.-Turkey relationship.<sup>319</sup> Regarding the larger protests and scandals, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki, insisted that, "We've expressed our concerns about some of the events that are happening on the ground directly, publicly and privately, and we'll continue to do that."<sup>320</sup> During a media briefing in December, she added that, "We would reiterate that we expect Turkey to meet the highest standards for transparency, timeliness, and fairness in its judicial system."<sup>321</sup>

Nonetheless, at a January 14, 2014, meeting between Davutoğlu and Secretary of State John Kerry,



the two leaders glossed over these issues and instead spoke about Turkey-U.S. cooperation regarding Syria, the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, and the Iranian nuclear dispute.<sup>322</sup> Moreover, the administration has declined to punish Turkey for its circumvention of the sanctions through its gas-for-gold scheme.<sup>323</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Every few years, the U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC) publishes studies of how the world might evolve over the next 2 decades. The authors of *Global Trends 2025*, which appeared in 2008, highlight several factors that they believe warrant focusing much attention on Turkey's evolving role in the international system. According to *Global Trends 2025*, a future Turkey most likely will blend Islamic and nationalist strains, which could serve as a model for other rapidly modernizing countries in the Middle East. Conflict and armed engagements between Israel, Iran, and Turkey contribute to instability in the region, which remains unstable as most populations in the Middle East live in poverty.

Turkey could play a prominent role in modernizing and reforming the region's militaries. Previous Turkish governments developed a strong, positive relationship with Israel and any future government could reverse the friction now existing between the AKP and Israel. Turkey's future leaders might also pursue far less conciliatory policies with religious regimes such as Iran, especially if Iran developed nuclear weapons or pursued destabilizing policies in Iraq, Central Asia, or the South Caucasus. An already important member of NATO's missile defense system, Turkey could play an even greater role in this architecture in the future.

A more recent study, *Global Trends 2030*, predicts that by that year, the diffusion of power among countries will see Asia surpass Europe and North America in terms of aggregate GDP, population size, military spending, and technological investment. In this vision, a regional power such as Turkey will become especially important to the global economy as Europe, Japan, and Russia continue to slowly decline. However, this study views Turkey not as a single entity, but rather as a collective with countries such as Columbia, Egypt, Iran, Mexico, and South Africa. Termed the “Next Eleven” by Goldman Sachs, they will surpass Europe, Japan, and Russia in terms of global power by 2030.

Turkey especially has a major opportunity to secure a strong footing in the future global economy. Aging is the key structural change underlying the negative economic outlook for Europe, Japan, and the United States. Turkey’s youthful population will only decline slightly by 2030, and an influx of young migrants should help maintain a stable workforce. Africa’s demographic youth bulge could reinforce Turkey’s economic growth—a reality that other emerging regional and global powers, including China, India, Brazil, and Turkey have already begun to seize.

Turkey has invested heavily in several North Africa countries. As of late-2011, Turkish investments in Africa had reached more than \$5 billion. Assuming continued growth, Turkey and other members of the Next Eleven will play a very important role in the future of Africa as well.

However, one area of concern in *Global Trends 2030* is Turkey’s youthful, ethnic Kurdish population. In general, the amount of armed conflict over the past 40 years has decreased; even when armed conflict has occurred, the amount of violence toward citizens has

been limited as well. However, during this same time period, there has been an uptick in intrastate violence in countries where a population contains a politically dissonant, youthful ethnic minority. More than 80 percent of all armed ethnic and civil conflicts have occurred in such countries. The ethnic Kurds in Turkey have a pattern of actively participating in intrastate conflict. Kurdish fertility in southeastern Turkey is at four children per woman. This high rate of fertility, combined with the overall decline in fertility of other Turks, will result in Turkey seeing a higher percentage of ethnic Kurds than ever before.

It is only natural that the U.S. intelligence community ponders the impact of Turkey's growing significance in global affairs. Turkey will exercise considerable influence over global and regional power dynamics during the next 20 years. The legitimacy, stability, and alignment of Turkey will have a major impact on the balance of power in Southeast Europe, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Turkey can either be a valuable source of stability in these regions or a dangerous contributor to their problems. If Turkey becomes too bogged down in its international agenda and ignores its own demographic situation involving the youthful Kurdish population, or engages the Iran Nuclear problem unilaterally, Turkey's likely bright future could become considerably dimmer.

The NIC studies many other countries, so Turkey was by no means singled out in its reviews. Prudent policymakers, in both Turkey and the United States, should consider what future contingencies they might encounter so as to perhaps anticipate and avert them. Some of these studies and seminars may have had an impact on U.S. policies toward Turkey, though this is

uncertain. Often policymakers are moved exclusively by the spirit of the moment – and we suffer as a result.

Turkish policymakers must adopt more of a collective, transatlantic perspective of a NATO stakeholder seeking the greater good of the West rather than that of a frustrated nationalist engaged in petty squabbles with NATO policymakers. Above all, they need to keep its bilateral disputes with Israel and the EU out of NATO's multinational security agenda. For example, much of the Western media coverage of Turkey's activities before the May 2012 NATO Summit focused, not on Turkey's admirable contributions to NATO's defense capabilities and in Afghanistan but on how the Turkish government sought to deny Israel access to any information from the U.S. BMD radar on its territory and deny Israelis from having an official presence at the Chicago summit.

Turkish diplomats also initially refused to allow EU leaders to attend the summit on the grounds that the EU was making no more contribution to NATO than the 56-member Organization of Islamic Conference, then led by Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, a Turkish national, and other international organizations that were not invited to Chicago. Turkish officials need to adopt more of the perspective of a collective NATO stakeholder seeking the greater good of the West. Turkey should avoid strategic surprises such as agreeing to host military exercises with China without consulting NATO allies. Without Turkey's full support, neither the EU nor NATO can achieve its important security goals in the Arab world. The solution for many EU-NATO problems involving Turkey is to address their root causes rather than merely their symptoms.

Expanding Turkey's role in EU security and defense decisionmaking would ease many of the anxi-

eties in Ankara about the Union's growing security roles. If Turkey is not to soon gain EU membership, then it should receive at least as much influence in ESDP decisionmaking structures as Ankara had previously enjoyed as a WEU associate member—a status that was evidently pledged at NATO's April 1999 Washington Summit. Alternately, undertaking a more genuine effort to bring Turkey into the EU would make Turkish policy makers more tolerant of exclusionary ESDP practices since they would know that this discrimination was a temporary phase pending Ankara's membership accession. Fortunately, Cyprus' EU presidency did not cause a further EU-Turkey rift, due to the parties' preoccupation with other issues, but the negotiations regarding the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership could further isolate Turkey from its traditional Western economic partners unless Brussels and Washington make a great effort to ensure that Turkey's interests are addressed, including keeping open the ultimate prize of possible EU membership. The EU's long-term potential will be degraded if its members cannot draw on Turkey's economic, military, and other assets.

With respect to the Middle East, Turkey and the United States need plans for what might happen should the government in Syria or other Middle Eastern countries retaliate against Turkey or abruptly collapse. If the Assad regime falls, fighting among the elements of the winning Syrian coalition over the spoils is entirely possible, with other neighboring countries having strong incentives to support local proxies. Until then, Turkey and the United States need to do a better job at unifying the disparate Syrian opposition factions around a moderate platform. Their lack of unity is a major reason why the Assad regime still enjoys much support among Syrians who prefer the

devil they know. Turkish authorities need to promote better integration among the insurgents as well as mechanisms to exclude Islamist extremists.

Furthermore, Turkey's strained ties with Israel will constrain its partnership with the United States, especially in the U.S. Congress. Although economic relations between Turkey and Israel remain strong, the two countries are maneuvering to punish one another diplomatically. Turkey is seeking to exclude Israel from international meetings, while Israel is trying to show it has other diplomatic options by pursuing better ties with Greece, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, and Romania. Despite efforts at reconciliation, supported by the United States in general and Obama in particular, and supported by their still strong economic links and mutual concerns regarding Syria, deep sources of tension between Turkey and Israel exist. For instance, both sides are seeking different goals in their reconciliation efforts. Israel wants to resume close strategic ties, whereas Turkey seeks an amicable divorce. In addition, Israel does not fit into the new AKP worldview, which deemphasizes state-to-state relations based on *realpolitik* and instead adheres to a mixture of Turkish and Sunni Islam bolstered by appeals to popular democracy and other transnational values.

Popular animosity in each country toward the other remains strong. A contributing factor to the poor relationship is Turkey's support for Hamas. At one level, this connection is useful for helping moderate Hamas policies and providing a channel through which Hamas and Western interlocutors can communicate. But in addition to providing much aid to Hamas that helps sustain its control over the Gaza Strip, there is evidence that Turkey's lax financial procedures are allowing Hamas to receive illegal funds for terrorist

activities.<sup>324</sup> The United States and other governments must increase their pressure on Ankara to strengthen its measures against terrorist financing and to crack down on the provocative actions of Turkish extremists against Israel and other targets.

The United States and other pro-Western governments should welcome Turkey's keeping Iranian influence within limited bounds in Iraq, but Washington would also be wise to keep any support to Ankara low key. Turkey can best advance Western (and Iraqi) interests if it is not seen as a U.S. proxy or a Sunni Muslim patron seeking to marginalize Iraq's long repressed Shiite majority. Although Ankara has sought to cultivate ties with Iraqi Shiites, and more recently Iraqi Kurds, the strong Turkish support for the Sunni-secular *Iraqiyya* bloc in the 2010 elections against the Shiite-centered block of incumbent al-Maliki aroused fears in Iran and Iraq that Turkey was playing such a role. Turkish officials appreciate that an explicitly sectarian approach would be counterproductive since most Iraqi Shiite and Iranian animosity is focused on Saudi Arabia and other patrons of Sunni extremism. At worst, Turkey could find itself leading a block of West-leaning Sunni states against Iran and its Shiite-dominated proxies. Such an Islamic cold war would still promote further divisions among Middle Eastern Muslims as their governments gravitate toward one pole or the other.

Turkey could change its own, thus far benign nuclear weapons policies in coming years, if, for example, unambiguous evidence arose that Iran is seeking to militarize its nuclear program. Turkey's plans to expand its domestic nuclear energy program would, for the first time, provide its government with the scientific, technical, and industrial foundations to pursue



genuine nuclear weapons options, as Iran's own development of the capacity to make nuclear weapons has demonstrated to Ankara and others. But Turkey's leaders might still decide that, even if Iran developed a small nuclear arsenal, they would be better off continuing to rely on NATO and Washington as well as Turkey's powerful conventional military, bolstered by national and multinational missile defenses, rather than pursue an independent Turkish nuclear force as a means of deterring even a nuclear-armed Iran. In this context, U.S. aspirations to eliminate NATO's tactical nuclear weapons may become a source of tension with Turkey.

From Ankara's perspective, the U.S. tactical nuclear weapons that have reportedly been stationed in Turkey for decades under NATO's nuclear-sharing arrangement help bind the U.S.-NATO security dimensions together. At times, some Turkish officials implied that having physical access to the U.S.-NATO nuclear weapons was a form of compensation for Turkey's not developing its own national nuclear arsenal. The weapons are a symbolic manifestation of Turkey's security links to Brussels and Washington that could be replaced by something else such as integration within EU defense structures or the emerging U.S.-NATO missile defense architecture.

If Iran developed a small nuclear arsenal, Turkey's leaders might still decide that they could continue to rely on NATO and Washington as well as Turkey's powerful conventional military, bolstered by national and multinational missile defenses, rather than pursue an independent Turkish nuclear force as a means of deterring even a nuclear-armed Iran. Even so, Washington and Brussels need to fully consider Turkish security concerns as they proceed to formulate



and pursue arms reductions policies with Russia. This is also true in the domain of non-nuclear weapons, given Turkey's interest in restoring the CFE and other mechanisms of preventing destabilizing arms races or conventional force imbalances around its periphery.

Human rights and economic issues complicate relations with the United States and other Western countries. Foreign critics complain about the Turkish government's repression of media freedoms, stalemated efforts to solve the problem of Turkey's Kurdish minority, and the lack of strong oppositional parties in Turkey. U.S. leaders will continue to be torn between seeking to sustain the advantages they receive from maintaining close ties with Turkey as an ally—vital security support in a critical geographic location—and disapproving of the prickly Erdoğan's authoritarian behavior and human rights violations.

Future developments could tip the balance in favor of a more critical approach to Erdoğan. The U.S. and NATO military withdrawal from Afghanistan could reduce the need for Turkey's direct and logistical support for the coalition military campaign there. The U.S.-Iran reconciliation, if it continues, will decrease Washington's concern with keeping Turkey in alignment with U.S. policies regarding nonproliferation, missile defense, sanctions, and balancing Tehran's influence in Iraq. A continued decline in the fortune of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world is reducing Ankara's value as a partner with Washington in Egypt and other countries. The diminishing U.S. role in the Middle East is making Turkey's reduced ability to promote pro-U.S. policies in that region. Turkey's economic slowdown, partly due to how the disorders in Turkey are scaring off foreign investors, will also lower Ankara's influence in Washington—something U.S. diplomats should point out.

One can imagine converse scenarios in which Ankara's value in Washington rebounds, but the main wild card is how the scandals, protests, and economic problems will affect Turkey's upcoming elections. A new government in Ankara, either under a weakened Erdoğan (less able to implement a Kurdish reconciliation) or a new political leader (who may not prove any more committed to the rule of law and political democracy than Erdoğan), will likely generate more mutual frustrations and further reduce the reluctance of U.S. leaders to challenge objectionable Turkish policies.

Another constraint on the Turkish-U.S. relationship is the decreasing U.S. share of Turkey's trade and investment, which now is oriented more toward the EU and the Middle East. Both governments need to make it easier for Turkish and American businesses to trade and invest in each other's countries. Initiatives are needed to reduce the level of popular hostility in Turkey toward the United States, which limits the depth and breadth of the relationship. Turkish-U.S. ties are still focused on government-to-government relations. The relationship needs to encompass civil society and private sector actors more.

More generally, the United States should adopt a more proactive policy toward potential sources of tensions between Ankara and Washington that, unresolved, could abort the recent upturn in Turkish-U.S. relations. For example, the United States could launch sustained initiatives to resolve differences between Turkey and other U.S. partners such as Armenia, Israel, Iraq, and the EU. It is understandable that Washington wants to limit Turkey's imports of Iranian natural

gas, but then the United States must be more open to allowing Turkey to obtain energy from the KRG even if Baghdad opposes it.

The Obama administration should continue its welcome efforts to reconcile Turkey and Israel. U.S. and Turkish policymakers have proved skilled at compartmentalizing their differences over Israel, but an Israeli attack on Iran, a popular uprising in Palestine, and other not improbable events could easily escalate Turkey-Israeli tensions, which invariably would spill over to adversely affect the Washington-Ankara axis. Less often cited, the Armenia-Turkey relationship has the same explosively destructive potential. After the failed reconciliation effort of a few years ago, neither country has made major exertions to overcome their current deadlock. But 2015 will mark the centenary of what many call the "Armenian genocide." Unless Ankara, quietly backed by Washington, renews its reconciliation efforts, the Armenia issue risks inflicting a blow to bilateral relations. Otherwise, Washington could find itself constantly torn between key allies.

Regime changes in other Middle Eastern countries could also have implications for U.S. military bases and deployments in Turkey's region, requiring further adjustments in the U.S. military presence in Turkey and other regional partners. It would be best if Ankara and Washington developed plans for such scenarios in advance to improve the prospects of a harmonious response to such contingencies. In addition to the substance of any policies, improving communications between Ankara and Washington is essential for avoiding further misunderstandings between these pivotal partners, regardless of who is in power in either country.

As the Western world continues to be concerned about what is seen as evidence of a Turkey reaching out to the East, it is vital for Turkey to reassure its Western allies of its support. On the other side, Western scholars and politicians should have more understanding of the fact that Turkey is not an island, and that the country must take the necessary means to create a sustainable environment for itself. A long-term objective should be renewing cultural ties among Turks and Americans. There is still much popular hostility in Turkey toward the United States, which limits the depth and breadth of the relationship. Bilateral relations still excessively focus on government-to-government ties. The Turkey-U.S. relationship must extend to encompass civil society and private sector actors. Turks and Americans still hold surprisingly negative misperceptions about one another. Encouraging more Foreign Area Officers to learn Turkish would pay dividends even beyond Turkey given renewed interest in the Turkish language in Central Asia and the Middle East.

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